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and Co., 1920; London : Kegan Paul, 1920.

MATTER, LIFE, MIND, AND GOD.  
London : Methuen and Co., 1923; New  
York : Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923,

# IDEALISM

AS A PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
BERNARD BOSANQUET



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## *Preface*

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**B**OTH as a student at Oxford and, later, during more than twenty years of teaching experience, I have often felt the need of a book which, like a map, would help a beginner to thread his way through the tangled mazes of idealistic theory. Such a book I have here tried to write. Whether I have succeeded or failed, the reader must judge for himself.

Only one warning would I permit myself. The subject is vast, and the space allowed me is small. I could have written several other books out of the leavings of this one. Hence, if any critic feels inclined to grumble at omissions, let me assure him that the giving of my reasons why I have included this and regretfully omitted that would itself make a book two or three times the size of this one.

In making my choice I have aimed at presenting idealism in such a way that a student, whilst having much to add and amplify, should have little to unlearn. I have tried to lay foundations on which he can securely build, whatever direction his interest in idealism may take. I have tried, above all, to give him the right approach to the subject, to put into his hands the clues by the

intelligent use of which he can unravel the rest for himself through first-hand study of the writings of the great idealists. Such study is, of course, essential, and this little book is meant to be an introduction to, and not a substitute for, it. I want to open avenues, not to close them.

For this reason I have deliberately left many loose threads of arguments and touched on many problems without pursuing them to the end. My chief fear, to confess it frankly, was that I might imbue the reader with a false sense of finality and encourage him to think that this book tells him all he needs to know about idealism. I provide only the appetizer: he must get the dinner for himself.

At the same time I have made no effort to follow in my treatment the beaten track and to repeat yet once more what can be read in current standard works. Similarly, for the sake of freshness of vision, I have avoided, or made but casual mention of, many of the well-worn stock-phrases of idealistic writers. I have taken frequent opportunity to point out just where contemporary criticism, especially of the "realist" sort, finds openings for attack in the idealist position. My treatment of Berkeley is, I believe, relatively unorthodox in emphasis and interpretation. The comparison of the idealisms of Bradley and Bosanquet, in the last chapter, will, I hope, be held to be justified by the greatness of these

thinkers, as well as by the fact that death has recently removed one of them from our midst.

Above all, I hope that my distinction of two types of idealism—one interpreting reality as a society of spirits (“spiritual pluralism”), the other interpreting it as appearances of the Absolute (“absolutism”)—will supply the student with that map of the idealistic maze of which I spoke above. But the details, I repeat again, he must explore and discover for himself.

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*March, 1924.*



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## INTRODUCTION



**I**DEALISM is a word which has two sources. One source is the term "idea." The other source is the term "ideal." "Idea" is the original term, which has come to us by direct descent from the philosophy of Plato, who himself took over the term from some of the scientific and philosophical writers of the fifth century B.C. "Ideal" is a modern substantive formed from the adjective *idealis*, which is itself a late Latin word formed long after the Romans had taken over the term "idea" from the Greeks into their own philosophical vocabulary. The original root of "idea," and, therefore, of "ideal," is *id-* (Latin *vid-ere*), which has yielded verbs and substantives to express the act of seeing and the objects of sight.

In current modern speech, as distinct from the technical language of philosophy, the meaning of "idealism" is determined by that of "ideal." Now, "ideal" is a word which itself has several shades of meaning. It has recently been defined as "a conception of what, if attained, would fully satisfy; of what is perfect of its kind, and, in consequence, is the pattern to be copied, and the standard by which actual achievement is to be

judged.”<sup>1</sup> And ideal is always a pattern, or standard, of excellence, perfection, or supreme value. But this common, or central, meaning of the term assumes different shades according to the different views that may be taken of the relation of ideals to what is “real,” to “actual fact.” Ideals may be regarded either (*a*) as realized, or, at least, realizable, in fact; or (*b*) as unrealizable in their fullness, but as defining the direction in which we must seek for realization; or (*c*) as unrealizable because purely fanciful and imaginary. These three possible ways of regarding the relation of ideals to facts depend, of course, on the kind of ideal with which we are dealing. When we meet, as we occasionally do, with an object which is perfect of its kind—an object which is “as good as it can be,” or “which cannot be bettered”—we say that the ideal of that kind of thing is here embodied or realized. Thus, *e.g.*, the ideal of human beauty may, now and again, be found temporarily realized in this or that human body. On the other hand, in morality, and, again, in religion, we tend to think of supreme excellence as something which it is indeed our duty to strive after, but which we can never hope to realize completely. By comparison with God, who is worshipped as the embodiment of perfection, the saintliest of men is still a sinner. The more con-

<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. vii., p. 86 ff.

scientious we are in our striving after moral goodness, or virtue, the less likely are we to be satisfied that our performance measures up to our aspiration. But, thirdly, it may, of course, happen that our ideals are mistaken, that we misconceive the nature of perfection. We may imagine false ideals which lead us astray in judgment and action.

All these shades of meaning reappear in the current, non-philosophical, uses of the term "idealism." An "idealist," especially as contrasted with a "realist," may be a man who is blind to facts as they are and invests them in his imagination with a perfection which is not theirs. Or, again, he may be a man whose life is ruled by ideals, who puts duty above inclination, public above private good. Or, lastly, he may be a man who prefers to think the best of his fellows and of the world around him, and who, where others see only imperfection, sees perfection, if not realized, at least in process of being realized. Such a one sees the "soul of goodness in things evil."

To turn from these popular meanings of "idealism" to the philosophical meaning is to turn from "ideal" to "idea." Literally, "idealism," as the name for a philosophical doctrine, means a theory of reality in terms of "ideas."

This statement, as it stands, does not, of course, help us much. It is a riddle rather than an answer. If we would find out what it means, we must explore the meanings of "idea."

Now, unfortunately, in the course of centuries of philosophical discussion, "idea" has acquired even more meanings than "ideal." Indeed, it has become a term so ambiguous and tricky that some modern writers avoid the use of it altogether. Nay, some idealists, like the late Dr. Bernard Bosanquet, have come to discard even the term "idealism" itself because of its misleading associations, and describe their own philosophical enterprise as "speculative philosophy." It is, thus, possible to be an idealist without "ideas." Or, in other words, it is possible, as we shall see, to state the theories which traditionally go by the name of "idealism," without using the term "idea" at all. Great as the part played by that term has been, its use has been something of an historical accident. At any rate, it is a term which can now be discarded as inconvenient and misleading, without sacrificing anything that is essential to the statement of the several distinct types of theory which are commonly classified together under the label "idealism."

However, before we can safely discard the term "idea," we must try to understand the chief senses in which it has been used by philosophers. For, although the term has become inconvenient precisely because of the many different senses in which it has been used, yet it is part of our task to make ourselves familiar with these different senses and to learn to distinguish them.

The term "idea" belongs to the vocabulary (a) of popular speech, (b) of psychology, (c) of philosophy.

(a) In popular speech the phrase, "to have an idea of" an object, is nothing but a circumlocution for thinking, believing, knowing, imagining, intending, etc., something. Thus, "I have an *idea* that it will rain to-day" is equivalent to "I *believe* (expect) that it will rain to-day." "My *idea* is to build a house of my own, rather than buy or rent one," means that I *intend* (prefer) to build rather than buy or rent. When I cannot answer a question, I may reply that "I have no *idea*," meaning that I *know* nothing of the subject. This popular use of "idea" has, as we shall see below (c), filtered down into current speech from the technical language of modern philosophy. But the term, in this process, has lost all precision. "Having an idea" is now nothing more than a loose way of expressing any kind of thought or imagination—a recollection of past experience, a plan for future action, a day-dream, the framing of a scientific hypothesis. In all these cases we could express our meaning just as well, without any mention of "ideas," by using one of the verbs for mental activity (judging, conceiving, remembering, etc.), and naming the object with which the activity is concerned. Or, rather, most commonly the object, *i.e.*, *what* we are thinking, is not a *thing* which can be named, but a *proposition* which

requires to be expressed in a sentence—either in an assertory sentence or else in a dependent clause beginning with “that” (e.g., above, “that it will rain”).

(b) Many psychologists have tried to rescue the term “idea” from this loose, popular use, and to re-invest it with a precise technical meaning. They distinguish three levels, or stages, in the development of our knowledge, viz., sensation, perception, ideation (or conception). They take the third stage to be characterized, as its name indicates, by the emergence of “ideas.” It is in this sense that we find psychologists discussing whether animals are capable of “forming ideas,” or are limited to sensing and perceiving. It is easiest to make the point clear to oneself by reflecting on the obvious difference between, e.g., seeing a colour or hearing a sound, and remembering or thinking of that colour or sound when they are no longer seen or heard. We commonly say that an object is “present” when we perceive it, “absent” when we imagine it or think of it. Now, it is to the technical description of this difference that many psychologists restrict the term “idea.” Thus, Baldwin’s *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* defines an “idea” as “the reproduction, with a more or less adequate image, of an object not actually present to the senses.” As this is not a book of psychology, it is not our business here to examine or criticize this definition. We will



notice only that, if the definition is taken strictly, we can have no "idea" of any object which, like the relation of identity, or virtue, or God, cannot from its very nature be "present to the senses." Yet we can obviously *think* of these things, and know various propositions about them; and we can also think without images. Hence, it would seem that, even for psychology, any account of thinking or knowing which restricts these activities to the use of "ideas," as here defined, must be inadequate.

Again, when "ideas" are currently labelled good, clever, brilliant, foolish, silly, these adjectives apply to *what* we are thinking of. We mean that what we are thinking of is relevant or irrelevant, adequate or inadequate, to the situation. I have, *e.g.*, to solve a difficult problem. I try vainly this way and that. At last a "brilliant idea" occurs to me, *i.e.*, I happen to think of a course of action which will produce the desired result. A man who is said to be "full of ideas" is a man whose memory, imagination, thought range over many objects, and who, consequently, is resourceful and well-informed. In short, all occasions on which we talk of "having ideas" can be dealt with according to the maxim: "There are no ideas, there is only thinking." It is good discipline to make clear to oneself that "to have an idea of——" or "to have an idea that——" are simply metaphorical expressions for "thinking of——" or "thinking that——."

(c) And so we pass, thirdly, to the philosophical meaning of "idea." Or, rather, we ought to say "meanings," for the fact is that in the course of more than 2,000 years of philosophical discussion the meaning of "idea" has undergone changes so profound that, whilst each stage is, no doubt, recognizably connected with the preceding one, yet they also differ so widely from each other as to compel us to treat them as distinct. Up to the philosophy of Kant and the post-Kantian idealism of the nineteenth century, we can distinguish three chief stages in this history. (1) For Plato, "ideas" are "real natures" or "essences." (2) For St. Augustine and the mediæval thinkers, "ideas" are the patterns in God's mind of all created things. (3) For Descartes, Locke, and their followers, "ideas" are all objects of whatever sort which human minds in any way apprehend. The subsequent history of the term "idea," in Kant, Hegel, and the idealists of the nineteenth century down to Mr. F. H. Bradley in our own day, is not, for our purposes, of the same importance. For, of these later thinkers, it is true that their idealisms can be stated without using the term "idea." In this introductory chapter, therefore, we shall confine ourselves to the three meanings enumerated above. Their history is, briefly, as follows:

(1) The original, non-technical, sense of "idea" among the ancient Greeks was, probably, "look," "appearance," "form." So far as sight is con-

cerned, it is obviously by their characteristic look, appearance, form that we identify, or recognize, things for what they are. Now, *what a thing is* has been technically called its "nature" or its "essence."<sup>1</sup> There is no reason why the essential nature of a thing should be restricted to what can be apprehended of it by sight. On the contrary, the essential natures of things might be such as to be incapable of being apprehended by any sense-organ whatever: they might be discernible only by intellect or reason. This is, in fact, the development which the meaning of "idea" has undergone in becoming a technical term in Plato's philosophy. The details of this development do not concern us here. It may well be, as Professor A. E. Taylor has argued with great learning, that the term first acquired a technical meaning in the School of Pythagoras, passing from "look" or "appearance," *via* "shape," "figure," "structure" of a body, to the geometrical structures or figures which the Pythagoreans regarded as constituting the real natures of different sorts of bodies, and as underlying their various sensible appearances. Other scholars have disputed this view, but whatever the truth in this matter may be, there is general agree-

<sup>1</sup> These terms, too, are translations from the Greek. "Nature" translates "physis," which appears to have meant originally what a thing is made of, its stuff, or substance (*cf.* J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*). "Essence," *via* Latin *essentia*, translates Aristotle's term "ousia," the "being," or the "what-it-is," of a thing.

ment that the term "idea" came to be cut loose from all restrictions to visible appearance or geometrical figure, and to be used quite generally for the real or essential nature of anything. Socrates, who was Plato's master, insisted that every moral virtue or value—the Just, the Good, the Beautiful, and so on—has an "idea" or "real nature." There is, as we should say, a *principle* of justice, goodness, beauty, etc., which is more or less adequately embodied in, or exemplified by, the acts or objects which we call, severally, just, good, beautiful, etc. Socrates, too, urged the importance of gaining of these moral "ideas," or principles, the kind of knowledge which enables us to define them, and thus to distinguish, *e.g.*, acts which are really just from those which merely appear to be so. Thus, "ideas" enable us to escape from the vagaries of "opinion" into the security of stable "knowledge." It is clear, too, that such principles, or *universals* (to use a technical term which philosophy owes to Aristotle), are not sensible, corporeal, geometrical, but "invisible" and "immaterial," objects to be apprehended by reason, not by the bodily eye. Precisely how far Socrates himself carried the development of this theory of "ideas" is a question much debated by scholars at the present day. But, at any rate, in the writings of Plato we find the theory generalized to cover the whole field of universal predication.

This statement requires some further explana-

tion, in order that we may appreciate clearly the difference between the "idealism" of Plato and the idealisms of later thinkers.

The theory of ideas, as we find it in Plato, is a theory of the objects of scientific knowledge. Science, as we say nowadays, is interested in universals, principles, laws. It is not interested in particulars *as such*. It studies particulars in order to discover the principles or laws of which the particulars are "instances" or "cases." A law, once discovered and formulated, will apply to, and "explain," *all* particulars of the same sort or kind. In other words, every law is a "universal" exemplified in a range of "particular cases." Let us illustrate. There is much talk just now of "cancer-research." A concerted effort is to be made by medical men to discover the cause and cure of cancer. "Cancer," here, is a "universal." The research aims at the discovery of the "idea," the "real nature" or "law," of cancer. No doubt the researchers can succeed only by examining particular instances of cancer, as various as possible, in a large number of patients suffering from the disease. But what they study in each "case" is the *nature*, or principle, of cancer *as such*, and so far as they grasp that nature in any case they will, *ipso facto*, have a knowledge of cancer in all other cases as well. Let it be noted that we have carefully said, "So far as they grasp. . . ." We do not affirm that we can learn all about cancer from

any single case. On the contrary, the symptoms and effects of cancer will vary somewhat with varying circumstances, and it will require the study of a large number of different cases if we are to acquire knowledge of the whole nature of cancer. Still, it remains true that the object of scientific curiosity in each particular case is the universal. We study cancer as such—the Platonic “idea”—in any and every particular cancerous growth. Statements about cancer in medical treatises are all “universal predications.” For, their subject is cancer as such, the universal; and this is why they are true of every particular case of cancer. The point which we have here illustrated from cancer-research holds good for every investigation in every branch of science. The objects of science are always universals, or what Plato called “ideas.” Only, we must take “science,” here, in a wider sense than the Natural, or Physical, Sciences from one of which our illustration was taken: we must include the Mental and Moral Sciences as well. In fact, “science” here is as wide as the field of universals concerning which we seek knowledge. The Platonic theory of ideas, then, is a theory of the “real natures” of particular things, *i.e.*, of the universal laws, or principles, of which particular things are instances or cases.

Now, there is one all-important point about this theory of ideas as objects of scientific knowledge which must be clearly understood.

Particulars, Plato tells us, may be perceived by the senses: ideas (or universals) can be apprehended only by thought or reason. In modern language they can be only *conceived*, not perceived. Now, an object conceived is commonly called a *concept*, and hence Plato's ideas, like modern universals, are often, and correctly enough, called "concepts." But "concept" is a dangerous word to use. For it has acquired associations for us which are quite alien to Plato's "ideas." We tend to think of a concept as peculiarly a creature, or product, of mental activity. We are commonly told that we "form" concepts by a comparison of particulars; that particular instances are given "facts," existing independently of us, but that the corresponding concept is something of our own making which exists only in our own minds. Particular cases of cancer—to recur to our example—occur in the real world; the concept of cancer is a creature of scientific theory and exists only in the minds of medical men. At any rate, this is a widely current modern view. Now, it is true enough that without thinking or reasoning, *i.e.*, without the mental activity of observing, comparing, analyzing instances, rejecting what is irrelevant, connecting what is relevant, we should never discover any universal or law at all. Consider, *e.g.*, the amount of intellectual labour which has gone into the discovery of Newton's law (*i.e.*, concept) of gravitation, or Einstein's law of



relativity. But, does it follow that these laws or concepts are therefore "mental" in a sense in which the facts from which they were elicited are not "mental"? Does it follow that these objects, because they are "concepts," exist only in the minds of those who think them? This conclusion has often been drawn, and those who have drawn it have then accused Plato of the philosophical crime of "hypostatizing concepts," *i.e.*, of treating what are really products, not to say fictions, of the human mind as independent realities. But this is a misinterpretation of Plato's meaning. His "ideas" are not products of any mind, not even of the mind of God. They are *objects* apprehended by mind, not *states* of the apprehending mind. They are not *formed*, but *discovered*, by thinking. And in discovering them, just as in discovering a scientific law or principle, we attain to scientific knowledge of the essential nature of the particular things and events which we perceive by our senses. Thus, if we call Plato an "idealist," we must mean by "idealism," not the modern theory connected with Berkeley's name, which is most often so called, but strictly the theory that concepts (universals, laws, principles) are the essential natures of particular things, and the real objects of scientific knowledge.

There is one characteristic, however, of Plato's "ideas" which may, at first sight, seem to be lacking in the "universals" and "laws" of modern



science. Ideas are, for Plato, not merely principles of explanation: they are also standards of perfection. They are not only the "essential natures" of particular things, but they are also "ideals." This comes out especially in Plato's treatment of moral and mathematical "ideas." What visible straight line is perfectly straight? What wheel, or other round object, is perfectly circular? What just action is perfectly just? Particulars are all more or less imperfect embodiments of "ideas." They have an "essential nature," but they exhibit that nature more or less incompletely. Quite generally, for Plato, no actual object of the senses quite realizes the ideal pattern, as it were, of the kind of thing it is. This treatment of universals as ideals is apt to strike us moderns as strange. Yet, we are not really unfamiliar with it. Whenever we distinguish particulars of the same kind as *good* and *bad* of *their kind*, we are really applying Plato's principle. In every kind of thing, specimens (cases, examples) will range from those which are fine and fully-developed to those which are poor and stunted. Our judging of cattle or vegetables at agricultural shows depends wholly on this principle. Every teacher, too, knows the difference between a good example which exhibits the essential nature (universal) of a certain kind of thing, *e.g.*, a disease, clearly and completely, and a bad example in which that nature is hard to discern. In morals, the character of universals

as ideals is especially striking. When we consider men in respect of their work or their duties, *e.g.*, as husbands, fathers, citizens, soldiers, etc., we can obviously distinguish between work well done and work ill done. Of two husbands, one may be good, the other bad, *i.e.*, one man's conduct may be all that a husband's ought to be, whereas the other's may fall far short. Yet, in order that we may thus compare them in respect of the degree in which each conforms to the "idea" of husband, they must both *be* husbands. There would be no point in judging that a certain man is a good or bad husband, when that man is not married at all. Thus, paradoxically, what we are, that we can be more or less perfectly, and the moral demand for each of us, in his profession and social relations, is to be what he is as well as he possibly can. This is why it is not absurd to appeal to a man with the exhortation, "Be a man!" He *is* a man, yes; but *being a man* is nonetheless a task in which a man may fail or succeed in varying degrees. Thus, one's "essential nature" (what one really is) is always also an "ideal" to be realized. In this point our modern thinking coincides with Plato's.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here are two examples, picked at random, which illustrate how the nature (idea) of a thing may be used as a standard of perfection (ideal) by which to judge particular cases. In a newspaper description of a lion at the Zoo, I read: "Though lithe and well-built, he is not a perfect specimen of a lion."

(2) The second chief meaning of "idea" has its roots in the philosophies of Philo, surnamed "The Jew," and Plotinus, the founder of the so-called "New-Platonist" school. But it has become important for us mainly through its adoption by St. Augustine, and its consequent influence upon the philosophy of the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages. The difference between the Platonic and the Augustinian theory of ideas is best understood by considering the relation of ideas to God. In Plato's philosophy God may fairly be said to occupy a relatively subordinate position. In the imaginative account of creation, in the *Timæus*, God is represented as making the world to the pattern of the "ideas," but the ideas are certainly not represented as being themselves created by God. For Plato the ideas, not God, are the supreme realities. On the other hand, when the Theism of Jewish and Christian thought came into contact with Greek philosophy, in the resulting give-and-take the balance was shifted in favour of God. If God is the supreme,

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The qualities he lacks, however, are apparent only to those well versed in the subject of perfection in lions." And here is a passage from the Preface of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*: "There should, at these Government manufactories and workshops, be authoritatively good and exemplary work done, and pure and true substance sold; so that a man could be sure, if he chose to pay the Government price, that he got for his money bread that was bread, ale that was ale, and work that was work."

and, indeed, the all-inclusive, reality, the "ideas" must somehow be conceived as part of His being or "essence." This was facilitated by their character as "ideal patterns," which only thought can apprehend. Thus God came to be regarded, not only as creating the world in accordance with these ideal patterns, but also as by His thought creating the patterns themselves. They are perfect, because He is perfect. The perfection of His nature is expressed in the perfection of what He thinks, just as the artist's nature is expressed in the æsthetic quality of the thoughts which he strives to embody in his works. Thus, the "ideas" become the creative thoughts of God, the eternal and immutable patterns in which He displays His essential nature as all-wise, all-good, all-powerful, and in accordance with which He creates the sensible world.

In this theory the status of the "ideas" is subtly changed, and the change proves to be of far-reaching importance. They are still, in a sense, "objects"—they are what God thinks. But they are also the products, or creations, of His thinking. Their existence and nature now depends on the existence and nature of the Divine Thinker. The ideas now are what they are because God is what He is: in other words, they are His way of manifesting Himself. They are wholly derived from Him: through them He reveals His infinite perfection.

To put the contrast as sharply as possible: for Plato the ideas, though they may be apprehended by mind, are in existence and nature independent of mind; for the mediæval thinkers, they are dependent on God's mind, for God's mind expresses itself in what He thinks, and apart from the activity of His mind they are nothing.

(3) The mediæval theory thus emphasizes the dependence of "ideas" on mind, without, however, changing their character as universals and ideals. The third theory, which meets us at the threshold of modern philosophy, on the one hand extends the dependence of "ideas" on mind to human minds, and, on the other hand, drops the restriction of the term to universals and ideals, so that it now covers any and every object of which any human mind is at any time aware. Indeed, among "ideas" in this modern sense there bulk most largely precisely those particular objects of sense-perception which Plato had so sharply distinguished from "ideas" in his sense. It is thus forcibly brought home to us how, in spite of a recognizable connection from step to step, the meaning of the term "idea" nonetheless undergoes profound alterations. The stages, briefly, are: universal—product of God's creative thought—object of human perception and thought.

The classical definition of "idea," according to the third theory of it, is John Locke's "Whatever is the object of the understanding when a man

thinks" (*Essay on the Human Understanding*, Book I., ch. vi., § 8). "Thinking" is here used by Locke, exactly like Descartes' *cogitare* or *penser*, as a general term for all mental activities by which an object may be said to be "presented to," or "apprehended by," the mind. This is clearly shown by Locke's further description of ideas as "the immediate objects of the understanding in the widest sense." This "widest sense" covers perceiving, remembering, imagining, conceiving—in short, to use the terminology of present-day psychologists, all *cognitive* activities, all modes of being conscious of objects.<sup>1</sup>

The sting of this theory, however, lies in the word "immediate." This implies a distinction between the "immediate objects" of consciousness and another kind of objects of which our apprehension is only "mediate." The former objects are apprehended "directly," the latter only "indirectly," viz., in so far as they are "represented" by the former. In short, "ideas" are "representatives," sometimes even described as "copies," in the mind of objects *outside*. The external

<sup>1</sup> The use of "idea" for the "immediate object" of thought is common to all the writers of this period. Thus, Descartes defines "idea" as "anything of which the mind is directly aware," and Malebranche, similarly, calls it "*l'objet immédiat de nostre esprit*." Descartes, in controversy with Hobbes, expressly defends his use of "idea" by reference to its mediæval use for the "perceptions of the Divine Mind"—a clear illustration of the linkage of theories.

world is known to us by being, as it were, mirrored in our ideas. This is the so-called theory of representative perception—a theory according to which we perceive the external world by means of its mental representation in “ideas.”

This theory is the result of two distinct lines of thought. (1) One of these is scientific, and deals with the *causes* of perception. (2) The other is philosophical, and deals with the *truth* of what we perceive.

(1) Attempts at a causal theory of perception, *i.e.*, at a theory explaining how perception comes about, go back, like so much else in philosophy, to the Greeks. Their common scheme is that the object somehow through the sense-organs affects, or stimulates, the mind and produces in the mind an effect by means of which the mind perceives the object. Through the Middle Ages back to the Stoics, and, beyond them, to Democritus, we can trace a tradition that perception takes place through the formation, under the stimulus of the external object, of *imagines in mente*, or *objecta interna*, which as “internal” effects are referred back to the “external” objects as their causes. This theory received a considerable impetus at the threshold of the modern era through the development, on the one hand, of the transmission theories of light and sound, and, on the other hand, of the physiology of the senses. Physics and Physiology thus combined to explain perception as caused by



a stimulus (*e.g.*, a ray of light) proceeding from an object to a sense-organ, and thence conveyed by the nerves to the brain. At this point, the theory divided into two branches. Strict materialists, like Hobbes, tried to stop with the effect in the brain, and thus treated every "idea" as a *phantasma*, *i.e.*, as "an appearance which remains in the brain from the impression of external bodies upon the organs of sense." But most thinkers, accepting the existence of minds as well as of bodies, went on, like Descartes and Locke, to a theory of the interaction of body and mind, according to which the effect produced by the external stimulus in the brain produces, in turn, in the mind a "sensation" or "idea of sense." Thus, when we perceive an object, *e.g.*, a tree, what we are immediately aware of are various sensations of colour, smell, touch, etc., in our minds, which we interpret as the effects caused in our minds by the external object, *i.e.*, by the tree as a physical thing. Thus the ideas in the mind "represent" the object of which they are the effects. *Directly* we perceive only the ideas which the object causes to appear in our mind. The object itself is not perceived at all, but known only *indirectly* by inference from effect to cause.

Plausible as this theory is at first sight, especially because of the apparent scientific warrant for it, yet it has been riddled by criticism and shown to be utterly incoherent and self-contradictory. For, if the theory is true, we are confined to our "ideas,"



and of the external objects which are supposed to be their causes we can know neither that they exist nor what they are like. Consequently, we cannot know whether our ideas are true or false. The very theory that our ideas "represent" objects which are not ideas will be but another, more complex, "idea" or "object of thought," and thus there is no escape from the circle of ideas. On the rock of this fatal flaw the theory suffers shipwreck, and in anything like its original form it no longer finds support among competent philosophers.

(2) The other line of thought which has led to the theory of representative ideas does not, like the previous one, attempt to account for the *origin* and *cause* of ideas, but seeks rather to explain what is meant by the *truth* of an idea. A "true" idea, we are apt to say, is one to which there "corresponds" an object in the "real" world; a "false" idea is a mere figment of our minds, to which, as to a dream or a fancy, nothing corresponds in the real world at all. Thus, a true idea has a representative function: a false idea represents nothing. It has, as some moderns put it, no "objective reference." To use one of Descartes' examples, the scenes and events which we witness in dreams are "objects" presented to our minds as surely as are similar scenes and events witnessed in waking life. In both cases we have "ideas"—objects of which we are immediately aware. Yet in the one case we treat these objects as mere fig-

ments, in the other we treat them as representing "real" events in the physical world. Clearly, according to this line of thought, the theory of representation is a device for bridging the gap between the realm of mental ideas and the realm of physical realities. It presupposes a sharp distinction between these two realms, and is thus, in technical language, "dualistic." It suffers from substantially the same defects as the causal theory, viz., it confines us to the circle of our ideas and shuts us off from physical things in such a way that the relation of representation between idea and thing, supposing it to exist, can never come directly to our knowledge. We can never compare idea and object, so as to verify their correspondence.

At this point we may conveniently note the ambiguity of the metaphor by which ideas are said to be "in" the mind. The supposed contrast between ideas "in" the mind and the objects "outside" the mind which cause ideas or correspond to them, has led to more loose thinking than any other phrase in the vocabulary of philosophers. "In" and "out" are, literally, metaphors taken from space, and, therefore, inapplicable to a mind. For a mind is not like a box in which, or outside of which, ideas can be supposed to be. "Being in a mind," then, can be only a metaphor for "being an object to a mind" or "being thought of"; and if the phrase is taken in this sense, we cannot infer from it, as has often been done, that

ideas are "mental," *i.e.*, that they are, not merely objects apprehended by the mind, but actually mental states or processes—bits of mind, as it were. Correspondingly, an object "outside" the mind ought to mean simply an object which is not being apprehended, as in the phrase "out of sight, out of mind." But, instead, being "outside" has often been identified with being "physical," with the result that physical objects have been regarded as incapable of being directly apprehended by mind at all. Their being physical has been held to place them by definition "outside" mind, *i.e.*, beyond the reach of direct apprehension, which is limited to the effects "in" the mind produced by the "external" thing. Thus, for the legitimate distinction between objects apprehended and objects not apprehended by a mind, there has been substituted the illegitimate distinction between ideas "in" the mind and the "external" world which the ideas "represent." But, when we brush aside the cobwebs of this theory, we can see that, though we may express the fact of a physical thing, *e.g.*, a tree, being perceived by saying that it is "in" the mind which perceives it, yet the tree does not thereby cease to be physical. Nor is there any good reason for treating the perceived tree as a mental idea representing another tree itself unperceived.

If, then, we reject these confusions, and with them the whole theory of "ideas" as mental repre-

sentatives of physical things, does anything of value remain in the "new way of ideas" to which Locke attached so much importance?

The answer is "Yes." But, if we are to appreciate this value, we must abandon, once and for all, the false lead of the notion of representation, with all its presuppositions and consequences. Once we have resolutely done this, we shall discover important truths by following up the clues implicit in Locke's "way of ideas." But we shall find, also, that these truths can be stated without retaining the term "idea" with its burden of misleading associations.

(1) In the first place, then, the way of ideas, once it has shed the theory of representation, introduces a definitely *new* point of view into philosophy. To consider objects as "ideas" is to consider them in an entirely *fresh context*, viz., the context of "objects of mind." Objects are of many kinds, and ordinarily we group them in several contexts according to their several kinds. There are, *e.g.*, objects real and unreal, actual and imaginary, true and false. And, correspondingly, there are different contexts, or "worlds," of objects. A "real" object is a member of the context called the "real world," in which neither giants nor fairies, neither Hamlet nor Pickwick, have a place. But when we watch a performance, or read the play, of *Hamlet*, or are absorbed in the *Pickwick Papers*, we live, for the time being, in

a context, or "world," of imaginary persons and imaginary events. The orderly, and consistent, distinction of these two worlds is one which, as children, we gradually learn to make, and which even grown-up people do not always wholly achieve. There are objects whose status is in doubt. Ghosts, for example, are by some people accepted as real, while others treat them as figments. Dreams, again, introduce us to yet another context, or world, of objects. Thus, there are many kinds of objects to apprehend and many ways of apprehending them. An educated mind is able to sort these various kinds of objects, more or less tidily and consistently, into their several contexts or worlds, and it passes, with ready adjustment, from world to world. In business, or politics, or science, our work lies in the "real" world, but when, in leisure hours, we take up a novel or go to a play, we pass into the world of imagination, whilst during sleep we may visit the world of dreams. In ordinary life we take these, and similar, distinctions for granted, and our practical, even more than our theoretical, interests lead us to occupy ourselves chiefly with the "real" world and to rank it as superior in status and importance to the others. But all these worlds are equally open to, and enter into, our experience. What we perceive, think, imagine, feel, may belong to any one of these worlds.

Now, to make us attend to, and reflect on, this

fact is, we may fairly say, the first great service rendered to us by Locke's "way of ideas." For there is one context which includes all the above contexts, viz., the context of "objects of mind," or, more simply, the context, or world, of "mind" or "experience." In this context all the others meet. In this context they can be compared and distinguished. Here they reveal their several natures and relations to each other. Considered as an "idea," *i.e.*, as something apprehended by a mind, a physical object finds itself one of a crowd of other objects, some of which are, like itself, physical, whereas others belong to all sorts of other worlds. For a mind is not limited to the "real," still less to the "physical," world. It may soar into the realms of Art on the wings of imagination, or in day-dreams amuse itself with unsubstantial fancies. And even in its "real" world it will acknowledge objects which are not merely "physical," *e.g.*, other minds, human and animal, and, in religion, a spirit, or spirits, divine. Thus the context of "objects of mind," or, as it has sometimes been called, the "standpoint of experience," has, as against all other contexts, or worlds, the outstanding merit of *inclusiveness*. It emancipates us from the preoccupation, which practical life imposes on most of us, with the real, especially in the narrow sense of the physical. It projects, as it were, all objects and their "worlds" on a single plane. For, whatever the differences between

objects, and however diverse the worlds to which they belong, in mind or experience they meet on common ground. And, if we take our stand on this common ground, we shall develop a philosophical programme which excludes no kind of object and no kind of experience, but holds that every kind of experience has some contribution to make to our knowledge of the Universe. Every kind of object reveals something of that whole which, as a whole, we call the Universe, or "Reality," in the technical sense of philosophy.

This, then, is the first of the distinctive notes which idealism strikes in modern philosophy.

(2) But, secondly, from the *world* of mind our philosophical interest may shift to the *life* of mind. Instead of thinking of mind merely as a focus, or meeting-point, of objects of all sorts and kinds, we may throw the emphasis rather on the *activity* of mind. But it matters greatly how we do this. For, if we misconceive the mind's activity in relation to its objects, we shall lose whatever gain our first step, above, has brought us. Perhaps our everyday way of speaking of mind and mental activity may here furnish us with a helpful clue. We certainly speak of mind as active: it feels, perceives, thinks, reasons, wills—in short, it exists and lives by *doing*, by being active. But we also express the very same fact by saying that mind "has" feelings, thoughts, desires, etc. And we even speak of these as "filling" the mind, as being



its "contents." There are modern thinkers who insist on a sharp distinction between (mental) act and (non-mental) object. In every perception they distinguish the act of perceiving from what is being perceived; in every thought, the thinking from the object of thought; in general, in every experience, the experiencing from what is experienced. Now, whatever may be the value of this distinction—and this is a problem to which we shall return<sup>1</sup>—the point which we must bear in mind here is that there is another way of looking at these facts. When we perceive, no doubt we are active—we attend, select, engage our interest. But what we perceive comes to us; it is not mainly, and originally never, of our choosing, still less of our making. Some object stimulates us and we "respond." It attracts and holds our attention. We become absorbed and lose ourselves in it. So, again, in thinking we are active, but what we think, once more, comes to us: the object of thought reveals itself to us, it determines our thinking. Whenever our thinking is good thinking, it is under the control of the object. When we are logically compelled to think so and not otherwise, then what we think is true. When we reflect upon these familiar facts, the "activity" of mind begins to wear a different face. It threatens almost to pass into passivity. Obviously we cannot separate the character and mainsprings of mental activity from

<sup>1</sup> See, below, ch. ii., pp. 63 ff.; ch. iii., pp. 77 ff.



the character of the "contents" or "objects" upon which that activity is exercised. It would certainly be false to conceive that activity as exercised upon a passive and indifferent material. We cannot perceive, think, will just what and when we please. In most ways it would be truer to say that "our" activity (the activity of "our" minds) is the activity of *what*, as object or content, fills our minds. If "I think" is one side of the truth, certainly "the world thinks in me," or "reveals itself in my thinking," is the other side. Our minds are microcosms, drawing all that is included in their range of awareness from the macrocosm of the Universe. And their activity and life is the activity and life of the Universe in them.

This is a second note struck by modern idealists—not by all, but certainly by many. But, whether struck by few or many, this second note is undeniably consonant with the first note, above.

(3) So far we have considered the activity of mind, and the various worlds of objects which enter into our experience, as if the contemplation of objects, be it in perception or thought, be it by way of knowledge, imagination, or dream, were the main business of mind. We must now remark, thirdly, that there are worlds in which mind is creative—worlds which are made and sustained by mind. Whether Nature, or the Physical World, can exist without a mind to apprehend it is a question to which we shall have to return. But there

can be no doubt whatever that there are Spiritual Worlds through participation in, or membership of, which mind attains its own fullest realization. Art, Morals, Economics, Politics, Religion are facts which exist only in the medium of mind. If there were no minds in the world, there would be no work of art, no moral conduct, no economic activities and organizations, no states, no churches. All these are realities in, and through, which minds express themselves. A full knowledge of what mind is and does is impossible apart from a full knowledge of these worlds which mind creates and through which it realizes its nature to the fullest. They are the very substance of its life.

It is the peculiar merit of idealism to have led the way in the philosophical study and appreciation of these worlds which mind not only contemplates, but creates and sustains as organs for its own self-realization. The "Philosophy of the Human Mind," which, in the hands of David Hume and the English Empiricists, had remained within the limits of introspective psychology, went out (so to speak) into the world under the leadership of Kant and Hegel and their followers in Germany and England, and drew within its compass the whole achievement of mind in Society and Civilization. Abandoning the "subjective" point of view of psychology, it acknowledged, not only the reality of Nature, but also the reality of the Spiritual Worlds which mind has erected on the basis of, and

through mastery over, Nature. The "Philosophy of Mind" thus became "Objective Idealism" or the "Phenomenology of Spirit"—a theory of all the ways in which Spirit appears and manifests itself in Nature and in Man.

This, then, is the third feature in the distinctive philosophical achievement of idealism. Many would hold that it represents the high-water mark of idealism, that idealists never aimed higher or succeeded more nobly than when they conquered for philosophy these realms of spiritual facts which are also spiritual values—realms which exist through mind and in which mind achieves the fullness of its own nature.

(4) But there is a school of idealists who develop the topic of mind in yet a fourth direction. These thinkers are "Spiritual Pluralists." They advocate the theory that, in last analysis, the universe is a Society of Spirits of all kinds and degrees. We know from ourselves what it is to be a mind or spirit, and with this clue to guide us we must interpret the rest of the universe. There will, obviously, be no difficulty in accepting, or postulating, the existence of God and other superhuman spirits, and in the animal world we are presented with sub-human spirits in varying degrees of remoteness from the human pattern. By analogy, we must suppose that plants, too, and even seemingly inorganic, or physical, objects, are really minds of a low order—an order so low that we can no longer

in practice apprehend them as minds. What we call the physical, or material, world is merely the way in which these lower kinds of minds appear to our senses. Thus, the universe is a vast society of spirits, forming an ordered hierarchy from the lowest up to God.

Whether the advocates of this fourth view are right in claiming that it is the only true, or genuine, idealism is a question which we are not called upon to decide at this point. For in this preliminary chapter our concern has been to trace the historical development of idealism, to show how the interest and emphasis of it has shifted from "idea" to "mind," and to distinguish the four main points of view, arising out of the concept of mind, with which idealism has enriched modern philosophy.

# IDEALISM AS SPIRITUAL PLURALISM



IN the first chapter we followed the varying fortunes of the term "idea." The original meaning of "idea," we found, was probably "visible form" or "appearance." This became generalized into "universal" or "essence." Next, because universals are apprehended by thought, idea came to mean "object of thought," and, thence, "object dependent on, and even produced by, thought." Lastly, developing along this track, idea ended by meaning, quite generally, any "object of which a mind is in any way aware."

At this point, we further found, the interest shifts from "idea" to "mind." For the "new way of ideas," propounded by Locke and others on the threshold of modern philosophy, amounts in effect to the programme of exploring the world of ideas, *i.e.*, the world of objects of which minds not only are aware, but through which they realize themselves and live their lives. This exploration could be, and was, conducted from several different angles. One way was to raise the question of *origins*. Whence are the ideas of a given mind? What causes the mind to become aware of an object? This was, in the main, the way taken by the *Empiricist* school of philosophers (*e.g.*,

Locke). A second way was to raise the question of *truth*. What makes an idea true? How can we be sure that our ideas are true, *i.e.*, that objects are really as we perceive, or think, them to be? This was, in the main, the way taken by the *Rationalist* school (*e.g.*, Descartes). A third way was to study what becomes of objects after they enter the field of awareness of a mind. What modifications do ideas undergo? Into what relations with each other do they enter? The pioneer-work along this line was also done by the *Empiricists*. But it would be a mistake to think of any school, or any thinker, following one way to the exclusion of all others. On the contrary, *Empiricists* have their theory of truth, and *Rationalists* have their theory of origins, and both have made contributions to the theory of the "association of ideas," and of the relation of "ideas of sense" to "ideas of memory" or "of imagination." The problem of the activity of mind, too, exercised them alike—whether there is any such agent or activity; if so, what precisely is the effect of mental activity upon the ideas; and, especially, whether there is such a thing as pure thinking, and whether there are objects, or, again, principles, of pure thought.

To go into details here would be to write a history of modern philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Suffice it to say that the exploration of the world of ideas developed



ever more clearly and consciously into the exploration of "mind" or "experience" in the widest sense, or, what is in this context the same thing, into the exploration of the Universe so far as it is "idea," *i.e.*, so far as it reveals itself in any way in our experience, be this feeling, thought, or action; be it sense-perception, conception, or imagination; be it science, art, morality, or religion. The net result is that idealism is transformed from a theory of the Universe in terms of "ideas" into a theory of the Universe in terms of "mind," or "spirit," or "experience."

Of course, as we saw already at the end of the last chapter, even these terms admit of different interpretations and may give rise to divergent lines of speculation. Hence, it ought to be no matter for astonishment that, in the writings of professed idealists, we find the most diverse formulations of idealism, according as each thinker selects, and emphasizes, this aspect rather than that of their common tradition. Very largely this selective emphasis depends on the intellectual movements in the thinker's own time which he is either seeking to incorporate in his idealism or else to combat. Thus, Berkeley's idealism is a deliberate challenge to the materialism which Hobbes and others derived from contemporary physical science. The idealists of the latter half of the nineteenth century in England (E. Caird, F. H. Bradley, B. Bosanquet, and others) draw

upon Kant, Fichte, Hegel for weapons with which to combat the empiricism of John Stuart Mill, the naturalism of Herbert Spencer, the positivism of Auguste Comte. The "neo-idealism," recently developed by Croce, Gentile and other Italian thinkers, is concerned to affirm the reality and fundamentality of spirit against the tendency of contemporary philosophical "realism" to belittle the significance of mind in the scheme of things. In general, modern idealism has proved itself to be an extraordinarily elastic and adaptable movement of thought, quickly responsive to changes in scientific theory, in social and moral experience, in religious life and theology. For all these affect minds, and the world of minds; and mind, in some sense, is the hero of every idealistic story.

We must look, then, among idealists for agreement in a common temper and a common direction of outlook rather than for agreement upon a set formula or upon hard-and-fast cardinal principles. Here, for example, are three formulas each of which is, in its own way, typical, yet which are very different from each other. Where Wallace (*Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, p. xxvii) declares briefly that idealism is "the doctrine that all reality is mental reality," Bosanquet (*Mind*, N.S., vol. xxiv., No. 115) expounds "the old lesson of Hegel and his sympathizers" as being "that the Universe is a single spirit, of whom or of which all appearances are manifestations; that all its manifestations

fall within a single experience, compact of experiences; that all of it is life and activity, and that outside this living experience there can be nothing." Another angle of approach, and a fresh set of terms, are used by Muirhead when he writes (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, eleventh edition, vol. xiv., p. 281): "Idealism as a philosophical doctrine conceives of knowledge or experience as a process in which the two factors of subject and object stand in a relation of entire interdependence on each other as warp and woof. Apart from the activity of the self or subject in sensory reaction, memory and association, imagination, judgment and inference, there can be no world of objects. A thing-in-itself which is not a thing to some consciousness is an entirely unrealizable, because self-contradictory, conception. But this is only one side of the truth. It is equally true that a subject apart from an object is unintelligible. As the object exists through the constructive activity of the subject, so the subject lives in the construction of the object. To seek for the true self in any region into which its opposite in the form of a not-self does not enter is to grasp a shadow. It is in seeking to realize its own ideas in the world of knowledge, feeling, and action that the mind comes into possession of itself; it is in becoming permeated and transformed by the mind's ideas that the world develops the fullness of its reality as object."

With these formulations of idealism by idealists

we may compare some of the formulations of its critics, remembering, however, that critics must be expected to put idealism in the form in which it can be most conveniently attacked. Let two examples, out of many, suffice. Bertrand Russell (*Problems of Philosophy*, ch. iv.) defines idealism as "the doctrine that whatever exists, or, at any rate, whatever can be known to exist, must be in some sense mental." One of the chief American critics of idealism, R. B. Perry, expresses what he regards as the "cardinal principle" of idealism in the form, "being is dependent on the knowing of it," or "to be is to be either knower or known" (*Present Philosophical Tendencies*, ch. vi.). The same critic finds the central motive of idealism in the endeavour to subordinate Nature to God by reducing Nature to a tissue of "ideas," thus restoring the "supremacy of spirit" in the Universe and defending religion, as the belief in the supernatural, against the naturalism of contemporary physical science.

Thus, idealism, having many shapes and forms, is difficult alike to expound adequately or to criticize effectively. Indeed, as will be seen above, the critics are all driven to simplify idealism, in the effort to pin it down to some compact thesis which can be once for all overthrown by argument. To this polemical purpose no idealist thinker lends himself better than Berkeley. Hence, Berkeley has been singled out by realist critics as the typical

representative of idealism. Perry exerts himself explicitly to show that all later idealists, even when, like Kant and Hegel, they profess to differ from Berkeley, merely restate Berkeley's fundamental principle. Other critics proceed straightway as if, by demolishing Berkeley, they could deal the death-blow to all idealism whatever. But there would be good reasons for studying Berkeley even if the realists had not singled him out as the chief target for their attacks. For, firstly, Berkeley is, historically, the founder of modern idealism. Secondly, his denial of the existence of "matter" has become a byword and a popular gibe against idealists, as though Berkeley were compelled by his theory to believe that his own body did not exist. Did not Dr. Johnson, posing as the sturdy champion of commonsense, think to refute Berkeley by kicking a stone and succeed only in showing that he had not understood the theory which he was holding up to contempt? Thirdly, idealists themselves are divided in their estimate of Berkeley. Kant laboured to differentiate his own "critical" from Berkeley's "dogmatic" idealism. At the present day it is fashionable to accuse Berkeley of "subjective idealism" and "mentalism," and many idealists, therefore, hasten to dissociate themselves from one tainted by these horrid vices. On the other hand, thinkers like Dr. J. McT. E. McTaggart hold that Berkeley's is the only genuine and satisfactory type of idealism, whilst the Italian neo-

idealists praise Berkeley for having recognized the central importance of spiritual activity, but criticize him for having failed to develop this insight to the full. And, lastly, it may not unfairly be averred that, as so often happens in controversy, Berkeley's position has been more freely expounded by friend and denounced by foe than patiently examined and understood by either. Thus, there are plenty of good reasons for our trying to gain a first grip upon idealism through a study of Berkeley.

The philosophy of Berkeley has three roots. They are: (1) the theology of the Christian religion; (2) the physics of Newton; (3) the philosophy of Descartes, Malebranche, and, more especially, that of Locke. The chief aim of the philosophical writings of his younger years, and more particularly of his *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), is to devise a theory of the Universe which shall retain all that is empirically well-founded in physical science, whilst substituting "God" for "matter" as the principle of explanation even for the physical world. It is too often overlooked that Berkeley's idealism is hardly less a philosophy of science than it is a philosophical defence of speculative theology. If he claims to have found a new, simple, and convincing proof of the existence of God, he is no less entitled to claim that he is offering a new and illuminating view of Nature. Indeed, the value and originality of Berkeley's theory of Nature are being revealed

to us in a fresh light at the present day by such work on the foundations of natural science as A. N. Whitehead's analysis of Nature as "what we perceive by the senses." It is well to bear this in mind as a corrective of the oft-repeated criticism that Berkeley's idealism is inimical to, and incompatible with, physical science. It is well, too, not to forget that Berkeley was sufficiently abreast of the mathematics of his day for his criticisms of the theory of fluxions, as the Calculus was then called, to arouse a controversy among mathematicians which lasted for more than a quarter of a century, and helped to clear up the theoretical foundations on which the Calculus rests.

If Berkeley is called an "idealist," it is generally for one, or all, of three reasons, viz., (1) because he affirms that the objects which we perceive by the senses exist only when and so long as a mind perceives them—this is his famous *esse est percipi* principle; (2) because he denies the existence of "matter"; (3) because he regards the Universe as a society of spirits dependent upon the Supreme Spirit, God.

Of these three theses, the last is undoubtedly the one which lay nearest to Berkeley's heart. His book on the *Principles of Human Knowledge* was written, in his own words, with the express design "to demonstrate the existence and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul, the reconciliation of God's foreknowledge and the freedom of man;



and by showing the emptiness and falsehood of several parts of the speculative sciences, to induce men to the study of religion and things useful." And in *Siris*, the work of his old age, whilst dropping his other idealist theses practically out of sight, he mounts from a recipe for tar-water as the panacea for all human ills to the vision of God as the pervading spirit manifesting Himself in all Nature. First and last, then, Berkeley's idealism is oriented towards God as the spirit who through Nature reveals and communicates Himself to us human spirits. If Berkeley denies the existence of matter, it is solely in order to make room for God. He is, first and last, a loyal churchman, defending orthodox theism—not without unorthodox arguments—against contemporary "atheism," and, in his moral writings, the standards of conventional virtue against the licentiousness born of "materialism."

Looked at from this angle, Berkeley neither is, nor aspires to be, original. He is merely upholding the moral and religious tradition which is the common heritage of Christendom.

We shall get a step nearer to his philosophical importance if we leave aside, for the moment, the religious associations of the term "God" and ask ourselves simply: What sort of picture of the Universe does Berkeley put before us? Of what kinds of beings does he conceive the Universe to be made up? The answer is, briefly, that the



Universe is made up of "minds," or "spirits," and their relations to each other. It is a society of spirits with a Supreme Spirit at its head. If we want a technical label for this sort of theory, we must call it "spiritual pluralism," because it affirms that, in last analysis, the Universe is a plurality of spirits communicating with each other. Orthodox theism, when transposed from the terms of theology into the terms of metaphysics, always reduces to the general type of spiritual pluralism. The social intercourse between men, and the hierarchical order of human society, furnish the model, or pattern, on which all spiritual pluralism is constructed. A society of spirits is, so to speak, the logical skeleton upon which Christian theology is found to be constructed when we strip off all specifically religious covering.

As a spiritual pluralist Berkeley is the forerunner of a long line of "idealists," and to many a thinker at the present day the very core and essence of idealism is this concept of the world as a society of spirits. On the other hand, the stream of idealism has been fed from many other springs, and there are, as we shall see, idealists who are spiritual "monists," and who, rejecting social analogies as inadequate, interpret the Universe as a single, all-inclusive spirit, sometimes called "God," but more often "the Absolute."

However, spiritual pluralism, as such, is far from being Berkeley's most original contribution

to philosophy. Indeed, he can hardly be said to have explored the many interesting speculative problems which it involves, or to have thought it out in detail as Leibniz and others did afterwards. We come nearer to the heart of Berkeley's originality when we ask ourselves the question: What is, and does, a spirit? Berkeley's answer is: A spirit is "something which knows or perceives"—an *active* being. The term "activity" derives for Berkeley its whole meaning from our experience of our own mental operations. Willing, imagining, remembering, and, above all, perceiving—these give us our experience of what it is to be active. Mere movement or change in natural bodies is, consequently, not activity, and our use of the active and passive tenses of verbs for describing natural events is, taken literally, a mistake and a fruitful begetter of metaphysical illusions.

The nature, then, of spirit is to be active, and all activity is mental activity. That Berkeley should have singled out *perceiving* as the chief type of mental activity gives a certain one-sided narrowness to his theory. For even if, somewhat doubtfully, we stretch the meaning of perceiving so as to include thinking, inferring, reasoning, the neglect of feeling and willing shuts out whole provinces of the life of mind from receiving adequate philosophical analysis at Berkeley's hands.

On the other hand, the emphasis on spirit as perceiving involves two consequences of the utmost

importance for the development of Berkeley's thought. One consequence is his sharp distinction between the *act* of perceiving and the *object* of perception. The other is his preoccupation with *Nature* as the totality of objects which we perceive by our senses.

A non-philosophical reader may well be puzzled at finding, apparently, the distinction between act and object of perception held up as a tremendous philosophical achievement. It may seem to him that the distinction is demanded by plain common-sense, and that it is implied whenever anyone says: "I see, hear, think, etc., something." This is true, and it is to just such everyday experiences that Berkeley himself appeals. Nor is he the first philosopher to have formulated and used the distinction, for it was a commonplace among mediæval thinkers. No, the importance of Berkeley's re-affirmation of what is seemingly an indisputable truism lies in this, that in several divergent directions it gave an impulse to philosophical speculation which has not exhausted itself even at the present day.

This, however, is a topic which must occupy us further in the next chapter. Here it is only necessary to note that Berkeley, trying to make the distinction between idea and act as sharp as possible, emphatically denies that we can have an "idea" of mind or spirit. If he merely meant that one's own mind and its acts cannot be objects

of sense-perception, we might readily accept his view. But, apparently, he meant, at any rate at first, that a mind cannot become an object at all. Taken literally, this would amount to a denial of all self-observation and self-knowledge, and might well provoke the rejoinder: "If mind and its acts can never be objects, how is it that we can think and talk of them, as Berkeley does himself?" That Berkeley did not intend to maintain the extreme view which would invite this criticism, is evidenced by the fact that, in the second edition of his *Principles*, he admits, not indeed an "idea," but at least a "notion," of mind. "I have," he writes, "some knowledge or notion of *my mind*, and its acts about ideas; inasmuch as I know or understand what is meant by these words." Of course, the introduction of the word "notion" for the word "idea" hardly solves the problem. It is merely a verbal invitation to attend to the difference between knowledge of *objects* and knowledge of *acts*, without telling us what the difference is. But with his curious modernity, Berkeley has here touched on a point which is still an open problem to present-day psychologists and philosophers.

From acts we must pass on to objects (or "ideas"), and thereby to Berkeley's most famous, and most paradoxical, doctrine, viz., the doctrine that the objects which we perceive exist only when, and so long as, a mind perceives them: to be is to be perceived. It follows that, if an object which

I am now perceiving is to be thought of by me as still existing when I no longer perceive it, I must suppose some other mind (or minds) to be perceiving the object at all times when I do not perceive it. Now, obviously, no single human mind, nor even all human minds together, perceive the whole of Nature at any time. Hence, Nature as a whole must exist as the object of perception for the eternal, all-inclusive mind which is God.

Now, it is most important to examine precisely what Berkeley means by this *esse est percipi* principle, because it is a principle which has been far more often criticized than accurately understood.

The non-philosophical reader will be assisted in following the inevitably somewhat technical discussion of this principle, if he prepares himself by a few simple reflections.

Everyday speech permits us to say equally that we see a table and that we see a brown patch of colour; that we hear a bell and that we hear a sound; that we smell a rose and that we smell an odour. In general, the "objects" which we perceive are named either as concrete, physical *things*, like tables, bells, roses, or they are named as colours, sounds, tastes, smells, temperatures, etc.

Further, these latter objects—"sense-data" as they are commonly called by present-day writers—are, in ordinary speech and thought, treated as *qualities* of the concrete things. We say the table is brown, the bell is loud, the rose has a sweet

smell, etc. Thus, the grammar of our language implies a metaphysical theory, viz., that the world consists of individual "things," each of which possesses "qualities." In technical terms, the world is composed of "substances" in which "qualities" are said to "inhere."

We have, then, two sorts of "objects" of perception—sense-data and concrete things. We interpret the former as qualities of the latter, and say that we perceive the latter by perceiving the former: we perceive things by perceiving their qualities. For no quality, so it is thought, can exist by itself: it requires a thing "of" which it is the quality—a substance in which it inheres.

With the help of these reflections, we are in a position to appreciate just what Berkeley means by his *esse est percipi* principle, and just what is the effect of it.

The colours, sounds, and other qualities of things Berkeley sums up in the general term "ideas of sense." "Idea" is here used exactly as, in the last chapter, we had found Locke use it, viz., as a technical term for any *object* apprehended by a mind. Hence, to call colours and other sense-data "ideas of sense" is, for Berkeley, the same as to call them "objects perceived by a mind."

Now, it is to *these* objects primarily that Berkeley applies the *esse est percipi* principle, and we shall all realize at once that it is not nearly as paradoxical to say of colours, sounds, odours, etc., that they

exist only when they are seen, heard, smelt, etc., as it is to say this of tables, mountains, plants, animals, and other concrete "bodies." In fact, there is a variety of more or less plausible and familiar arguments for the view that sense-data are, in their nature and existence, more or less mind-dependent.

But what, then, becomes of concrete things, or "bodies," if their supposed qualities exist only when perceived? It is here that we come upon what is really revolutionary in Berkeley's thought. He treats a thing as nothing but a "collection" of ideas of sense, which collection is marked off from other collections of ideas by a distinctive name. In other words, he challenges and denies the concepts of substance, quality, inherence. A "thing" for him is not a substantial somewhat which owns qualities. It is merely a recurrent group of certain colours, tastes, smells, etc. This is truly startling doctrine. It sweeps aside the familiar metaphysics of everyday speech and thought, and substitutes an altogether strange and novel interpretation of the objects of perception. There are colours, but no coloured things. There are temperatures, but nothing of which we can strictly say that *it* "is" hot or cold. If Berkeley is right, our ordinary language about things is utterly misleading. We have, truly, a situation in which, in his own words, "we ought to think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar." Con-



sidering how subversive this new doctrine is, it is remarkable that Berkeley should not have emphasized it more. It is hardly mentioned again, after having been introduced, almost casually, in the very first paragraph of his *Principles*. "As several of these [ideas of sense] are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one *thing*. Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence, having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name apple; other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things."

It is thus clear that we have two quite distinct applications of the *esse est percipi* principle to deal with. The first application is to "ideas of sense," *i.e.*, to colours, tastes, smells, etc. The second is to ordinary "things," on the ground that they are nothing but collections of ideas of sense. Clearly, whether the first application is right or wrong, the second raises an altogether fresh issue. Is a "thing" to be conceived as a substance with qualities? Or is it a mere collection of sense-data? Few critics of the principle have been careful enough to observe that two distinct theories have to be examined. But it is worth remarking, as illustrating the modernity of Berkeley's thought, that his treatment of "things" has been revived in our own day in the more refined form of Bertrand



Russell's theory of a thing as a "class," or "logical construct," of sense-data. At any rate, the effect of Berkeley's theory is to eliminate from our thinking, if not from our grammar, the concept of substance and quality. And if it be objected that colours, smells, etc., surely cannot exist by themselves, but must belong to something as its qualities, Berkeley's reply is that they exist, not by inhering in a substance, but by being objects for a perceiving mind. In short, Berkeley's theory amounts to substituting in the interpretation of the data of sense-perception the concept "object-for-a-mind" for the concept "quality-inhering-in-substance."

This change, no doubt, makes a profound difference in the way we think about what we perceive, but it makes none in what we actually perceive. To this extent Berkeley is undeniably right in his reiterated contention that his theory does not deny the existence of anything which we actually observe by our senses to exist. It only explains what that existence consists in, viz., in being perceived by a mind, and, in doing so, it substitutes a relationship which is intelligible, and which we can verify in every moment of experience, for one which is both unverifiable and unintelligible. For how can, *e.g.*, a colour exist by inhering in an unthinking substance? Or who, if qualities are all that we perceive, has ever perceived a substance or the relation of inherence? In short,

nothing which we actually perceive to exist is by Berkeley's theory declared to be non-existent. Only a new interpretation of the manner of its existence is substituted for the traditional one. To say that colours and sounds, and even houses and mountains, exist only as "ideas" or objects of perception is strange, and may be untrue, but it is certainly not the same thing as to say that they do not exist at all—which is what Berkeley is commonly accused of saying. It is not even true that on Berkeley's theory it is impossible to distinguish between objects which are "real" and objects which are "imaginary." He has definite tests for discriminating between the real and the unreal—real objects are not dependent on my will; they are more vivid than those of dream and imagination; they exhibit a superior coherence and order, permitting us to formulate "laws of Nature." These tests are, no doubt, purely pragmatic. That is to say, they work well on the whole, but they are neither infallible in practice nor demonstrable beyond all theoretical doubt. But then no other theory is in any better case.

One more point requires to be emphasized in the face of traditional misunderstandings. An "idea" for Berkeley is an *object* of the perceiving mind: it is not a *state* or *process* of that mind. It is, therefore, not true that Berkeley's theory is "subjective idealism," at least if by that term is meant the theory that each mind perceives nothing

but its own mental states. True, Berkeley's language is occasionally careless. He uses "sensation," at times, as a synonym for "idea of sense," and this is misleading for us who are accustomed by psychology to use both "sensation" and "idea" for states of mind. And he speaks of an idea being "in" the mind when all he means is that an object is being perceived. But when he actually faces the question whether ideas are states of mind, his answer is emphatically in the negative: "those qualities are in the mind only as they are perceived by it; that is, not by way of *mode* or *attribute* [Berkeley's terms for "state"], but only by way of *idea* [*i.e.*, object]."

And now we are ready to consider Berkeley's denial of the existence of "matter." This is not, we now know, a denial of the existence of what we ordinarily call physical things. These exist just as, and when, we perceive them. What, then, does Berkeley deny when he denies the existence of "matter"? He denies the truth of a familiar theory concerning the *causes* of the objects (ideas) we perceive. This is the theory, already mentioned in the previous chapter, according to which what we perceive are impressions or sensations produced in our minds by the action upon them of material objects. We perceive the effect, *viz.*, sensations (which are, therefore, truly mental states); we infer the cause, *viz.*, matter. It is this *theory*, and nothing else, that Berkeley is denying.

And his denial here, as always, is based on an appeal to experience. If the effects produced in our minds are all we ever do, or can, perceive, then the supposed cause is an imperceptible, unknowable Somewhat. All attempts to determine its nature are otiose guess-work. Moreover, "how Matter should operate on a spirit, or produce any idea in it, is what no philosopher will pretend to explain; it is therefore evident there can be no use of Matter in natural philosophy." Of course, the objects we perceive, not being of our own making, have their cause, but that cause, for Berkeley, is God, and Nature is the "visual language" through which He reveals His power and goodness to us. Thus, what Berkeley rejects is the familiar causal theory of perception which tries to tell us what the material object does to the perceiving mind. To deny the existence of matter is, for Berkeley, to deny the *theory* that the colours, sounds, etc., which we perceive, are mental states, and that these states are the effects produced in our minds by material objects, themselves unperceived and imperceptible. For him, what we perceive are real objects, and their cause (producing agent) is God.

In the treatment of causation once more there appears Berkeley's astonishing modernity. He distinguishes, in effect, two senses of causation. In the strict and proper sense of "efficient cause," only a spirit can be a cause. Causation, in fact, is one with the will which makes things happen.

That is the only empirical meaning we can give to the verb "to cause"; that is the only way in which we experience causation in ourselves. By contrast, ideas, *i.e.*, objects, are, as Berkeley quaintly puts it, "visibly inactive . . . so that one idea or object of thought cannot produce or make any alteration in another." Over against this strict sense of causation as *spiritual agency*, we have the scientific sense of it as the *correlation of events according to law*, to use present-day terminology. Berkeley's way of expressing the same thing is to speak of "general rules" for the explanation of particular effects, which rules are "grounded on the analogy and uniformness observed in the production of natural effects." More characteristic still is the passage in which he says that "the connection of ideas [objects of perception] does not imply the relation of *cause* and *effect*, but only of a mark or *sign* with the thing *signified*." In other words, natural science deals with Nature, as the totality of what we perceive by the senses, in abstraction from the spiritual power which creates and sustains it, and it seeks only to formulate rules or laws permitting us to infer from the occurrence of one event (the sign, or "cause," popularly so called) the occurrence of another event (the thing signified, or "effect"). Such rules, however, are but evidence of the wisdom and benevolence of God, who has established laws of Nature in order that we may learn by experience "that such and

such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas," and steer our life's course accordingly. Thus, whilst the ultimate philosophical explanation of Nature is, for Berkeley, to be sought in God and God's creative activity, scientists are left free by his theory of Nature to restrict themselves to proximate explanations in terms of whatever laws of the correlations of sensible events they can discover by induction from the observation of these events themselves. Berkeley's criticisms of natural science are directed upon two points. Firstly, in the sections of his *Principles* which are specially devoted to the discussion of the bearings of his idealism on physics and (applied) mathematics, his one aim is to hold natural science to its proper business of dealing with the actual data of perception. He is relentless in urging upon science to remember its empirical foundations, and to avoid theories which substitute speculations about imperceptible entities for the study of the laws of perceptible events. Secondly, he is hostile, at all times, to the tendency to turn science into metaphysics and thereby to make "matter" the ultimate reality. Now, it cannot honestly be said that either criticism makes the work of physical science in principle impossible, or that there is anything in Berkeley's idealism, as we have above analyzed it, which is incompatible with science, once the abstract standpoint of science has been properly understood. On the contrary, in so far

as Berkeley rejects the theory that colours, sounds, etc., do not belong to "Nature," but are merely impressions in our minds, he renders an inestimable service to science by ridding it of an error which would condemn all its work to futility. For, if the data of perception which are, after all, the scientist's sole evidence, are nothing but mental impressions, then science is inevitably cut off from the real world. Berkeley, by boldly identifying Nature with the totality of what we perceive by the senses, restores colours, sounds, and all other sense-data to the context of Nature as *bona fide* natural phenomena, subject to natural laws. He restores to science its true object—the real world which we perceive. In this he has the support of the best present-day work on the scientific theory of Nature, *e.g.*, in A. N. Whitehead's writings.

Science, however, is not philosophy, for science deals only with objects (ideas) and their relations, in abstraction from minds and their acts of perceiving, thinking, willing. As soon as by reflection we undo this abstraction, some physical objects, *viz.*, human bodies, are seen to manifest minds or spirits like our own, and Nature as a whole is seen to be the "visual language" of God. The Universe is now revealed to us as a society of spirits under God.

And so God is the copingstone of Berkeley's philosophy. Indeed, in the *Second Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, Berkeley explicitly



employs the *esse est percipi* principle for a "direct and immediate demonstration" of the existence of a God from "the bare existence of the sensible world," as follows: "Sensible things do really exist; and, if they really exist, they are necessarily perceived by an infinite Mind: therefore there is an infinite Mind, or God." Alongside of this argument Berkeley, as we have mentioned in passing, employs also the argument from design, inferring the "workmanship of God" from the "beauty and usefulness of the several parts of the creation." But the above argument is his original contribution to a philosophical theology.

In the next chapter we shall attempt to examine, systematically and on their merits, the several elements of idealistic doctrine which Berkeley has here launched upon the world. In preparation for this task we may conveniently here draw together what we have found these elements to be:

1. The *esse est percipi* principle, as applied to sense-data and to things as collections of sense-data.
2. The concept of mind (or spirit) as *act* in distinction from *object*.
3. The concept of the Universe as a *society of minds or spirits*.
4. The central position assigned to *God*.

After this examination of the Berkeleian type of idealism, we shall be in a position to appreciate some of the alternative ways in which other idealists have developed the common theme of all idealism, viz., that mind, or spirit, is the ultimate reality.



EACH of the four specifically "idealistic" doctrines which, in the last chapter, we had distinguished in the texture of Berkeley's philosophy, deserves to be examined on its merits, as these are revealed alike by the developments which they have undergone since Berkeley's time and by the criticisms to which they have been exposed.

(1) First, then, let us begin with Berkeley's distinction between mental *acts* and the *objects* ("ideas") upon which they are directed. Just as for an object to be is to be perceived, so for a mind to be is to perceive; or, generally, to be active. And, certainly, it would seem that no mind can perceive, or be active in any other way, without objects. Every act of apprehension or will implies something which is apprehended or willed.

Nothing, on the face of it, could be simpler or more obvious than this distinction. Yet it raises many curious and difficult problems, and some of the various solutions propounded for these problems lead far away from Berkeley's position, not only into other forms of idealism but even into philosophical theories which are no longer idealistic at all.

(a) One of these problems, as we saw above, was

noted by Berkeley himself, though he did no more than touch the fringe of it. This is the problem how we are aware of our acts as distinct from their objects. We are aware of objects in virtue of our acts of apprehension. But how are we aware of the acts themselves? Yet, surely we must experience them in some way, for how, else, could we talk of them and distinguish them from their objects? We say, *e.g.*, I see a colour, I hear a sound, I think something. Here we are sure of the colour, the sound, the object of thought—they loom large before our minds, filling the field of consciousness. Where, over and above them, are the acts? How are we aware of them? And, if to be aware of an object requires an appropriate mental act, must we not postulate correspondingly a second act for becoming aware of the first act, third act for the second, and so on *in infinitum*?

Berkeley's own attempt to grapple with the difficulty does not, as we saw, carry us far. He is right in recognizing that there is a difference, not only between act and object, but also between the experience of an act and the experience of an object. But to express this difference by saying that we have a "notion" of the act whereas the object is an "idea," does not carry us further. However, if Berkeley failed, it is hard to say who has succeeded better. For the problem is still with us at the present day.

Let the reader who wishes to appreciate for him-

self the point of the problem, and the plausibility of the various solutions propounded, consider such a familiar experience as listening to a sound. "I hear a sound," he will say. Now, the constituent of his experience to which the words "a sound" refer is easily identified. The question is, what in his experience is expressed by the words "I hear," and, in general, by the personal pronoun and the verb? The appeal is to "introspection": is there any factor in the total experience of hearing-a-sound which can be identified as "hearing" (let alone as "I"), over and above the sound? Sometimes at night we wake up thinking we have heard a sound. We lie in bed in the darkness and the silence, listening intently—"straining our ears"—for the sound. What is this listening? How do we experience this mental act? Quite truly we are sensible of a "strain." The eyes stare fixedly; the body is kept rigidly still. If we could prick our ears we would do so. Even as it is, we experience sense-data which seem to come from the muscles of the ears. Does this feel of our bodily adjustments constitute the act, or is there some purely mental listening over and above all these sense-data?

If there is such an act—and the argument applies quite generally to all kinds of experience in which minds apprehend objects—should we, perhaps, credit it with a peculiar quality of transparency? We owe this suggestion to a "realist," Dr. G. E.

Moore, who, like many realists, agrees with Berkeley on the distinction of act and object. On this view, then, the act is hard to observe because it is, as it were, diaphanous, its sole function being to present the object to us. This transparency of the act would be what Berkeley means when he says that the act cannot become an "idea," *i.e.*, that it cannot be objectified.

Another, and perhaps better, way of expressing this is to say that the act of perceiving is *felt* rather than experienced as an object; or that the mind is such acts of perceiving, thinking, etc.; or that it *lives* at each moment in such acts. A mind is not something distinguishable from what we call "its" acts: it is a tissue and sequence of acts and exists only in and through them. As act, a mind apprehends an object, but just because a mind is such acts of apprehending, these acts are not themselves apprehended as objects. One of our foremost realist thinkers, Professor S. Alexander, has coined a new terminology for describing this situation. Objects, so he proposes to say, are "contemplated," but the acts by which they are contemplated are themselves "enjoyed." Clearly, Alexander's "enjoying" an act is the equivalent of Berkeley's "having a notion" of it. But Alexander's term is the happier, in that "enjoying" an act brings out better that non-objectifying awareness which, above, we tried to describe by saying that the act is felt, or that we live in, or are, the acts in virtue

of which objects are "before" us. In the same sense, some thinkers speak of "immediate experience," where "immediate" means the non-objectified part, or factor, in experience.

Over against all these ways of defending the existence of mental acts, we have a group of theories which deny that there is any act or agent at all. Accepting Berkeley's appeal to experience, they deny that within any experience there is discoverable, by introspection or analysis, either an act of perceiving or a mind, spirit, self (the terms are used as synonyms by Berkeley) which perceives. The type of all such theories is that of Berkeley's successor, David Hume, who declares that, instead of activity and self, or spirit, he can find only a bundle of ever-changing sense-impressions, memory-images, feelings, composing kaleidoscopic patterns in the field of consciousness. In short, Hume's analysis of experience rejects the distinction of acts and ideas, and, cancelling out the acts, leaves only a tissue, or flux, of ideas. Even so great a psychologist as William James may be quoted on this side. For in his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, he declares that in trying to discover what thinking is, *i.e.*, to identify what features in our experience the term "thinking" means, we can find nothing, over and above the objects of thought, but a mass of sense-data, due more especially to *breathing*. To think = to breathe!

The most recent variant of this type of theory is

that of certain American neo-realists who, following up James's hint, affirm, quite generally, that there is no such thing as mental activity, and that the only activity involved in perceiving, thinking, etc., is physiological response to environmental stimuli, and that the only agent is the body, the living organism.

There the matter stands at the present day, at any rate so far as it turns on introspective evidence. If anyone naïvely thought that Berkeley expressed nothing but a plain fact of experience when he distinguished act and object, this array of mutually contradictory theories will disillusion him. Meanwhile, it is worth noting how this controversy cuts right across all boundary-lines between philosophical systems. Idealist opposes idealist, realist opposes realist. F. H. Bradley has no use for the concept of activity in psychology; James Ward regards the subject, or "experient," and its activities as fundamental. Yet both are classed as idealists. English realists, like G. E. Moore and S. Alexander, treat the analysis of experience into mental act and object as fundamental, but then go on to argue against Berkeley that the object exists in its own right, and does not need to be perceived in order to exist. The American neo-realists agree in rejecting the *esse est percipi* principle, but insist that the activity to be distinguished from objects is physical, not mental. These few samples, out of many, must suffice to show what a curiously

perplexing problem Berkeley has raised by his seemingly innocent distinction of act and idea.

So far our discussion has followed the track of asking what the term "activity," as applied to minds, means; and since the term must express something that we experience, the question became how we experience mental activity, and whether we experience any such thing at all.

(b) But this is by no means the only direction in which philosophical speculation has been launched by Berkeley's theory of minds as active. A great many thinkers, so far from enquiring into the empirical evidence for activity, have rather taken mental activity for granted as a fact, not only familiar, but self-evident and not further analyzable. And they have then gone on at once to treat it as fundamental and as *the* clue to the nature of the Universe as a whole. Thus, Leibniz holds that whatever is real must be active as we know ourselves to be active. In other words, every real must, in its own kind and degree, be the sort of thing which we know ourselves as minds, or spirits, to be. This leads Leibniz straight to a further development of that "spiritual pluralism," that theory of the Universe as a society of spirits, which we have already found in Berkeley. And many later thinkers, down to James Ward and McTaggart in our own day, have followed along this path. Other thinkers, again, have given to the argument a "monistic" turn, by regarding the activity of



our own minds as, so to speak, a pulse of a single, cosmic activity which manifests itself in all that exists. The existence of a multiplicity of individuals is only an appearance: at bottom, the same cosmic activity or energy expresses itself in all. Many are the theories of this type, from Schopenhauer's *Will* to Bergson's *Élan Vital*. Yet again, there are those who emphasize the *creative* character of this cosmic spiritual activity, from Fichte's theory that the world-spirit "posits" an object-world in order to have an "Other" to overcome and make one again with itself, to Bergson's creative evolution, and the *atto puro* of the Italian neo-idealists. The question, too, which kind of mental activity in ourselves is most typical of the character of the cosmic activity has been variously answered, and where Schopenhauer takes Will as the type, others have taken Reason or Thought, and some at the present day, like E. D. Fawcett, favour Imagination. Carlyle caught murmurs of this debate, as it was going on in his own time, and echoed them vaguely in his declaration that the Universe is "a sum total of Actions and Activities."

(c) A third line of thought, instead of thus magnifying spiritual activity at the expense of the object-world, starts from the fact that act and object, if distinct, are yet also manifestly related. An act without an object seems hardly conceivable. It would be a mere fragment of a concrete ex-



perience, and, in fact, there is no experience in which act and object are not found in closest correlation. From such considerations as these spring all those forms of idealism for which the subject-object relation, the "duality of subject and object in experience," is the fundamental fact (cf. Muirhead's view, quoted in the last chapter). Subject and object are, as it were, the two poles of all spiritual activity. Standing at the subjective pole, we can distinguish minds according to the object-worlds with which they are occupied, *e.g.*, the scientific, the artistic, the religious mind; and we can rank minds according to the completeness of the grasp of each upon its world, as when we say that X. is a greater scientist than Y. Standing at the objective pole, we can dwell on the "abstraction" involved in taking the object apart from its relation to the subject, and try to show that only as entering into the life of mind does it exhibit its full nature. And, of course, this correlation-view of subject and object also lends itself to the formulation of those "high tension" forms of spiritual experience in which the subject, overcoming the opposition between itself and the object, finds itself in the object and becomes one with it.

(*d*) But even this is not yet the end. For there is still the Kantian treatment of activity. The great advance, as we shall see more fully in the next chapter, which Kant makes on Berkeley, is

that he does not simply accept mental activity as a fact, but seeks to analyze the universal principles inherent in it. It is Kant who first identified mental activity, in its cognitive aspect, with *judgment*, recognized judgment as synthetic, and attempted to distinguish the principles of synthesis ("categories") inherent in judgment. It is Kant, similarly, who seeks to formulate the universal principles involved in moral conduct and in æsthetic enjoyment as mental activities. But to this point we shall return.

(2) From the problem of mental activity, the reader will turn, probably with a sigh of relief, to the problem of *esse est percipi*. But, alas, there is here little relief for him, for this problem again hides beneath an apparent simplicity a large amount of technical complexity.

Berkeley, fully alive to the paradox which the *esse est percipi* principle presents to unsophisticated commonsense, exerts all his ingenuity and argumentative skill to make the principle plausible. He offers, in consequence, a great variety of arguments in support of it, and many of these are stated in several different ways. Thus, *e.g.*, like a good debater, he tries to catch his opponents by their own arguments. Are they not saying that colours, sounds, and sense-data in general, are nothing but "impressions" in our minds, caused by external objects? If so, this is to admit the principle for sense-data. For impressions can exist only when

perceived. If the opponent replies, "But there is the external object which causes the impression," and goes on to ascribe to that object shape, solidity, weight, etc., Berkeley counters by pointing out that these qualities, too, are but objects of perception and, as such, fall under his principle. And he replies, further, by reminding his opponent that a mind restricted to impressions can never directly perceive either the alleged external object or the way in which impressions are caused. Hence, the whole causal theory of perception is an unverifiable and unnecessary hypothesis. In other passages, Berkeley appeals to the "relativity" of sense-data, *i.e.*, to such facts as that the same water may feel cold to one hand, warm to another; that a square tower may look round at a distance; a large object appear small, etc. But the relevance of this latter argument for Berkeley's purpose is, to say the least, disputable, and, anyhow, these are not the arguments to which he himself, in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, attaches the greatest weight. No, Berkeley's most important arguments are two, each of which requires us to make an experiment in thinking, an "easy trial." First, he asks us to "attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things." Secondly, he asks us to try whether we can, without contradiction, suppose a sensible thing to exist unperceived.

It is important to observe how explicitly Berkeley limits his arguments to "sensible things," *i.e.*, to

what we have agreed to call "sense-data," and to those "collections" of sense-data which are ordinarily called "things." Thus, "there was an odour, that is, it was smelt; there was a sound, that is, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch." Again, "the table I write on I say exists; that is, I see and feel it: and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it." Mere reflection on this situation yields, so Berkeley claims, the "intuitive knowledge" that "to exist" and "to be perceived" are synonymous. They mean the same fact. Is this convincing? True, if for simplicity's sake we leave hallucinations and dreams out of account, we shall all agree that what we perceive exists as we perceive it. The sounds we hear are existing sounds; to see a colour is to see an existing colour, and similarly for other sense-data. But when we say that the sounds we hear exist, we mean, surely, something more than the idle tautology that the sounds we hear are sounds we hear. Perceiving, in short, gives us evidence that what we perceive exists. But does it prove that to exist is the same as to be perceived? So, again, it is true that when we think of something as existing which we are not now actually perceiving, like the table in the study we have just left, we think of it as something which we should per-

ceive if we went back. We expect to perceive it: but does this prove that the object's existence is one with being perceived, and that, if it is not now perceived by any mind, it is non-existent? Consider the sarcophagus of Tutankhamen before it was actually seen by the excavators. As the exploration of the tomb progressed, the existence of the sarcophagus became increasingly probable, and the excavators had good reason to expect that they would see it on opening the last of the shrines. Moreover, until it was actually seen, and its existence thereby established beyond doubt, there was always a possibility that the shrines might be found empty. Commonsense here appears clearly to distinguish between existing and being seen. Of course, Berkeley could always save himself by saying that on his view, too, the sarcophagus existed before it was discovered, because it was all the time perceived by God. But the appeal to God presupposes that the identity of existing and being perceived has been established. Whereas the point of our argument has been to draw attention to situations in which we appear to discern "intuitively" that, whilst an object must exist in order to be perceived, its existence is not simply identical with its being perceived. Realists have opposed to Berkeley the principle: to be is one thing, to be perceived is another. The latter implies the former: a thing must be in order to be perceived. But the former does not imply the

latter: a thing, in order to be, does not need to be perceived.

It does not seem, so far, as if a conclusive choice between these rival views were possible. One may look at colours or listen to sounds *ad nauseam*, without getting any nearer to a decisive answer to the question, whether "to exist," for sense-data, does or does not *mean* "to be perceived."

Perhaps, however, the deadlock may be broken by looking at the situation from another angle. Even if "to exist" does not mean "to be perceived," it might still be the case that the one is never found without the other; nay, that it is impossible for the one to occur without the other. We should not, then, be entitled to say that "being" is *identical* with "being perceived," but we should be entitled to say that "being" and "being perceived" are invariably and necessarily *connected*. And this interpretation of the *esse est percipi* principle would serve Berkeley's purpose just as well as the other.

Now, it is true that the only sense-data of the existence of which we have direct knowledge are the sense-data which we actually perceive. We may infer that under stated conditions we shall perceive sense-data which we do not now perceive (as when astronomers months in advance prepare expeditions for observing the phenomena of a total eclipse of the sun), but the inference is subject to

verification by actual observation of the phenomena, in which observation the existence of the phenomena and their being perceived go together. Moreover, in arguing about sense-data not now perceived, we are still *thinking* of them. Indeed, even when we suppose the existence of things of which no mind ever has thought or will think, the supposal is still an act of thought concerning these very things. Quite generally, the world with which we deal is the world which, as object of perception, thought, imagination, desire, enters into our experience, in the widest sense of that term. None other can we deal with. If there exists anything which never has, and never will, become an object of human experience, either directly or indirectly, that something is, for us, completely negligible. For, *ex hypothesi*, we have no evidence either of its existence or of its non-existence. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the supposition of such an object has any intelligible meaning at all. In theory and in practice our concern is with the world which reveals itself to our minds. Any other is literally nothing to us. It is only within the experienced world that the terms "existence" and "reality" have any applicability. Carried beyond that world they are empty sound. Thus, each of us makes his contact with the Universe through his acts of perceiving, thinking, etc. His acts of apprehension define "his" world: he cannot even think of anything as not belonging to that world, for, in so



thinking of it, he is making it *ipso facto* part of his world.

In short, our position is incurably "ego-centric." We cannot eliminate ourselves and then try to think of reality apart from ourselves. We cannot compare an object as it is when perceived with itself as it is when not perceived. We cannot escape from ourselves.

Now, admitting all this as true, does it justify Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle? Granted that whatever we find to exist is an object which we perceive or think, does it follow that these objects cannot exist except in relation to perceiving or thinking—if not ours, then God's? Or is this impossibility of eliminating ourselves merely a difficulty of method, a predicament? One of Berkeley's most vigorous realist critics, R. B. Perry, maintains that Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle is simply an illegitimate exploitation of this "ego-centric predicament." According to Perry, the predicament is common to all thinkers, and all theories, and should not, therefore, be used in favour of idealism and against realism. We must simply ignore it and seek a decision on other grounds. That we cannot experience reality apart from its relation to ourselves does not prove that reality cannot exist without that relation. Against Perry's view, however, it may be urged that the relation is undeniably a fact, and a fact, moreover, co-extensive with experience. Can it really be that



such a fact justifies no inference about the nature and existence of the world? That it does justify an inference is the view of all who, accepting the fact, make experience, and the constant connection of mind and object in experience, the basis of their whole philosophy.

Still, though this is a possible choice, it is not a compulsory choice. The ego-centric predicament admittedly suggests the *esse est percipi* principle, but it does not conclusively prove that principle.

Can we, then, clinch the matter by further argument? Such further argument is offered by the second experiment which Berkeley proposes, viz., can we without contradiction conceive the existence of sense-data unperceived? Now, this raises a fresh point. The question now is not whether we can mean by "to exist" anything but "to be perceived," nor again whether every object we perceive or think stands *ipso facto* in relation to our minds. The question now is whether, from the very nature of the object, it is inconceivable that it should exist except in this relation to a mind. In other words, if we attempt to conceive the object as having, in Berkeley's words, an "absolute existence, without any relation to being perceived," do we find ourselves contradicting the very nature of the object? Can the object be seen to be such that it cannot exist apart from an apprehending mind? If so, the relation of objects to minds is not merely, as the ego-centric predicament had shown it to be,

universal *in fact* over the whole field of our experience, but it is *necessarily* implied in the very nature of the objects themselves. As we might put it: once an idea, always an idea; once object-for-a-mind, always object-for-a-mind. Here is a characteristic passage illustrating the nature of Berkeley's reasoning. "What are houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects, but the things we perceive by sense? and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations? and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived?"

Now this latter argument is, certainly, highly questionable. Professor R. B. Perry, with his genius for inventing technical labels, calls it the "fallacy of initial predication." We begin by perceiving, say, a colour and call it an "idea" (*i.e.*, an "object which we perceive"). And then, having so labelled it, we go on to say that it would be a contradiction for an object of perception ever to exist unperceived. But, really, this is arguing from the fact that we have called the colour an object of perception to the conclusion that the colour can never exist unperceived. The illegitimacy of the inference is disguised by Berkeley's introduction of an intermediate step in the term "idea."

The net result would seem to be that Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle may be true, but has *not been proved* to be true. On the other hand, whilst

the criticisms of Berkeley show that his arguments do not establish his principle, they do not show that the principle is intrinsically false. Here we must leave the matter so far as Berkeley is concerned, though we shall return to it from quite a different angle in a later chapter.<sup>1</sup>

It remains to add only that the issue raised by Berkeley has proved a fruitful subject of debate ever since, and that many arguments have been introduced into the debate which lay beyond Berkeley's scope. Of these, we may, in passing, glance at two, because they are of special interest at the present day.

(a) First, then, present-day thinkers have tried to turn the flank of the *esse est percipi* principle by an analysis of the nature of *relations*. The principle asserts that there is a relation between object and perceiving mind, and that the object cannot exist except in that relation. In general, all knowledge is analyzed as a specific "cognitive relation" between subject and object. This being granted, the question has been raised whether relations are "external" or "internal." By calling a relation "internal" is meant that the terms which are found standing in that relation cannot exist apart from that relation. By calling a relation "external" is meant that the terms found in that relation can also exist apart from it—they may enter and leave the relation without prejudice to

<sup>1</sup> See ch. v., pp. 150 ff.

their existence. The *esse est percipi* principle, from this point of view, treats perception, and, in general, knowledge, as an internal relation. Hence, its critics labour to show either that all relations whatever are external, or, at any rate, that the cognitive relation is so. For if the cognitive relation is external, then objects will be capable of entering that relation, but there will be no necessity for them to do so.

(b) Secondly, the *esse est percipi* principle has been challenged from a wider point of view. The chief motive underlying all forms of present-day "realism" is, in the words of S. Alexander, to assign to minds their proper place and function in the scheme of things. If the *esse est percipi* principle is allowed to stand, the place of mind can only be central. It will be the essential condition of the existence of all objects, if not actually the source which produces or creates them. On the other hand, if it can be shown that objects can exist "independently" of being apprehended by any mind, mind will obviously lose its central and dominating position in the scheme of things. Now, there are many movements in present-day thought which converge upon such a dethronement of mind. Chief among them is the biological theory of evolution, according to which the emergence of minds belongs to the latest stage in the evolution of the world, and presupposes, not only a pre-existing bodily organization, but the whole physical environ-

ment. Clearly the conditions out of which mind has emerged cannot, on this view, depend for their existence on being objects of mind. The function of mind is to apprehend the environment, and thereby to enable organisms to live more successfully. Mind may even be, as Alexander calls it, a "fresh level of perfection." But, nonetheless, it is only a special kind of phenomenon among other phenomena in the world. It is not the basis and source of all that exists. Thus, the denial of the *esse est percipi* principle will, if successful, make room for a very different picture of the Universe than is presented by Berkeley's Spiritual Pluralism.

(3) We turn, thirdly, to this spiritual pluralism itself—this picture of the world as a society of spirits under the Supreme Spirit, God. Berkeley can hardly be said to have done more than sketch, very roughly, some portions of this picture. Many spaces he has left blank, and some of the lines he has drawn can hardly stand. Perhaps this is just the reason why the concept of a society of spirits has proved so fruitful in philosophical interest, and why a succession of thinkers, from Leibniz to James Ward, McTaggart, and H. Wildon Carr at the present day, have devoted their efforts to the attempt to work out this type of world-view more completely.

(a) Berkeley's society of spirits appears to consist only of human spirits and God. He mentions no others, and it is not clear whether he would

have admitted others. But, leaving the questions of superhuman spirits and of the disembodied existence of human spirits after death out of account, there is a real problem presented by animals, if not also by plants. The same reasoning which leads us to interpret the body and behaviour of a man as manifesting a human spirit would lead us to recognize spirits in the higher animals too. And if in the higher animals, why not in the lower? And if in the lower animals, why not in plants? For, like animals, plants are organisms of individualized structure, and their reactions to their environment exhibit, like those of animals, the purposive character which we sum up in the term "adaptation." And, lastly, if we thus follow the thread of continuity downwards, can we stop at what we ordinarily call the inorganic and inanimate? May it not be that here, too, the outward and visible form expresses an inward spirit, but a spirit too remote from ours to be still recognized by us as such? If we decide to trust ourselves to these analogies, based on the continuity of Nature, our society of spirits will be vastly transformed. We human spirits will be an aristocracy ranking above a serried hierarchy of spirits of every degree of development. Our own bodies will be colonies of lower spirits dominated by that one higher spirit which each of us calls his mind or soul. Leibniz's *Monadology* is the classical example of such a thorough-going working-out of spiritual pluralism.

It yields a picture of the world in which nothing is lifeless or soulless, a world of teeming spiritual life, yet ordered in an ascending hierarchy from the lowest and most rudimentary kind of spirits up to the perfection of spiritual nature in God.

(b) Further, to be a spirit is to be constantly active in perceiving and thinking. But perceiving implies "ideas," *i.e.*, objects, and each spirit thus has its "world" of objects. This is a very important qualification of the concept of a society of spirits, as we shall see in a moment. But, first, we must raise the question whether two, or more, spirits can perceive the same object? This difficulty does not appear to have occurred to Berkeley at first, but he mentions it later in the *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, where he makes Hylas object: "But the *same* idea which is in my mind cannot be in yours, or in any other mind. Doth it not therefore follow, from your principles, that no two can see the same thing?" Berkeley's answer is hardly satisfactory. He is right, indeed, in rejecting "the abstracted idea of identity," *i.e.*, in recognizing that when two persons perceive the "same" thing, yet what each perceives is to some extent *different* from what the other perceives. This is easy to verify. Let anyone look at a table from different successive points of view, and he will find that the colour and shape which he perceives from one point of view will differ, in varying degrees, from the colour and shape per-



ceived by him from any other point of view. Thus, even the "same" single observer will perceive the "same" table differently from different points of view. It is easy to see that two, or more, observers looking at the same table from different angles, and each with his own quality of vision, will differ even more in what they perceive. But in order to deal with these facts, it is not enough, as Berkeley does, merely to reject "abstract identity." What is needed is "concrete identity" or *identity in difference*. In other words, we must so conceive "the" table which, as we say, is the "same" for different observers, that all the admitted differences in what different observers perceive are included. Leibniz appreciated the problem and tried to deal with it by his theory of "pre-established harmony" between the object-worlds of different monads (spirits). At the present day, fresh logical methods have been brought to bear on the question both by idealists (*e.g.*, Bradley, Bosanquet) and by realists (*e.g.*, Bertrand Russell). But details of these developments would take us too far. It is enough to become alive to the fact that here is a problem which no spiritual pluralist dare ignore.

(c) Apart from the question of identity, however, objects of sense-perception play a very important part in Berkeley's society of spirits, because all such objects have the function of revealing spirits to each other. There is no sense-datum, or combination of sense-data, which is not the mani-



festation of spirit. For, human spirits manifest themselves to each other through the collections of sense-data which we call human bodies. And God manifests Himself through the totality of sense-data which we call the physical world or Nature.

This view presupposes that one spirit cannot perceive other spirits directly, but only by inference from the sense-data through which each spirit manifests himself. Directly each spirit knows only itself in its activities of perceiving, etc. That there are other spirits in the world like itself is an inference. Applying this doctrine to human spirits, Berkeley writes: "When we see the colour, size, figure, and motions of a man, we perceive only certain sensations or ideas excited in our own minds; and these being exhibited to our view in sundry distinct collections, serve to mark out unto us the existence of finite and created spirits like ourselves. Hence it is plain we do not see a man, if by *man* is meant, that which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do: but only such a certain collection of ideas, as directs us to think there is a distinct principle of thought and motion, like to ourselves, accompanying and represented by it. And after the same manner we see God. . . ." Here, again, Berkeley has opened up a problem bigger than he realized. True, many thinkers have followed him in his solution, which even at the present day is still the most fashionable. None-

theless, there are many difficulties in the way of accepting as adequate the theory that we know other minds by inference from the resemblance between their bodies and behaviour and ours. For one thing, we do not see ourselves as others see us, *i.e.*, we never have of our own bodies, movements, gestures, facial expressions that extensive spectator's knowledge which we have of the bodies, etc., of others. Again, the argument seems to presuppose a degree of knowledge of our own minds which, in fact, we do not acquire until long after we have learnt to recognize other minds. Indeed, self-knowledge comes very largely as the result of social intercourse. Through being treated as minds by others we learn to recognize ourselves as minds. At the present day, this problem of our knowledge of other minds, so far from being settled, is one of the most keenly discussed, and our ampler knowledge both of individual and social psychology has shown us that it is far from being the simple problem which it is in Berkeley's view. But, undeniably, it is a crucial problem for spiritual pluralism.

(*d*) Further difficulties arise when God is brought into the argument. These difficulties are of two kinds. One concerns our knowledge of God. The other concerns the part played by God in the commerce of sense-data through which men learn to know one another as spirits.

Our knowledge of God, according to Berkeley,

is "after the same manner" as our knowledge of human spirits other than our own. This must mean (*a*) that we cannot know God directly, but only by inference—a doctrine which would be challenged by all mystics; and (*b*) that we infer God only from that inclusive collection of sense-data which we call Nature—which inference, though it yields a creator of Nature, yet gives us something much less than the God of religion. Berkeley does, indeed, assert that "the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of man, because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable than those ascribed to human agents." And he declares, further, that God is "intimately present to our minds," because all our "ideas and sensations," *i.e.*, all the objects we perceive, are the effects He produces in our minds, they are the "visible language" through which God speaks to us. In passages such as these we may well see Berkeley's attempts to correct the tendency of his theory to make God appear remote and His existence speculative and precarious. But not thus can the weakness of this inference be overcome. After all, what is the likeness between the compact collection of sense-data which is a human body and that vast, miscellaneous mass of sense-data which is Nature? The characters of the human body and human behaviour from which, according to Berkeley, we infer a human spirit, have little resemblance to the characters of Nature

from which he would have us infer God. Berkeley, in fact, infers God from Nature partly because his theory requires a creator for all "ideas" which are not of human producing; and partly because, in the beauty and order of Nature, and in the fixity of Natural Law, he sees evidences of God's wisdom, benevolence, and power. But to neither kind of evidence for God is there a fair parallel in the evidence for human spirits. Thus, it is far from clear how we know God "after the same manner" as man. Once more the problem which Berkeley bequeathed to his successors is deeper than he saw.

And now for the second difficulty, which is as formidable as it has been commonly overlooked. All Nature, says Berkeley, is a "sign," because an "effect," of God. But Nature—"everything we see, hear, feel, or anywise perceive by the senses"—must include, along with all other human bodies and their behaviour, our own bodies and behaviour. What follows? I lift, say, my arm and strike a blow; I move my speech-organs and articulate sounds. In both cases, I produce collections of sense-data.<sup>1</sup> Yet these same sense-data,

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, is the existence of these sense-data one with being *perceived* by me, or is it one with being *produced* by me? Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle seems to have been originally framed without reference to this problem of one's own body and its voluntary movements. Berkeley, in fact, was thinking, to begin with, of man only as an *observer* of Nature, not as an *agent* who is himself, through his body, part of Nature.

being undeniably parts of Nature, are also produced by God. The collections of sense-data, then, which we call movements of human bodies, are caused at once by two agents, viz., by human spirits and by God. How can this be? And what sort of relation of human spirits to the Divine Spirit is thereby implied? To these questions Berkeley supplies no answer because, so it would seem, he wholly overlooked the problem. He does, indeed, say that God "maintains that intercourse between spirits whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other." But this merely means that it is by God's will that men perceive the sense-data which are their own and other men's bodily movements. It does not explain how we can conceive these movements to be produced at once by human spirits and by God.

Clearly, the theory that the Universe is a society of spirits, centring in God as the Author of Nature, and that Nature is an assemblage of sense-data, bristles with difficulties. But, then, it is just the difficulties which make a philosophical theory fascinating and supply a fertile stimulus to further efforts. Berkeley's version of spiritual pluralism has the great merit of showing clearly, if unintentionally, just where the most formidable problems lie.

(4) We have already anticipated much of what has to be said concerning God, as the fourth "idealistic" factor in Berkeley's philosophy. But

something more remains to be said here, for, so far, we have considered God rather as a *spirit*, than specifically as *God*. In other words, so far the part assigned to God in the Universe has been determined by purely speculative, rather than by strictly religious, motives. We have been asked to think of God as the eternal, omnipresent mind for whose perception all Nature exists, and who creates all Nature according to His own fixed laws. But in religion, though we may mean all this by "God," we certainly mean much else besides. For in religion we love and fear and worship God. Yet what is there to love, fear, worship in this metaphysical God of Berkeley's? Supposing Berkeley's arguments convinced us of the existence of such a Being, still it would not follow that our hearts were stirred or our pulses quickened by religious emotion. For Berkeley himself the term "God" was, undoubtedly, charged with religious associations. But this is because Berkeley was a sincerely religious man, not because religion, as such, contributes anything directly to his philosophical theory. It may be said that this is as it should be; that to prove the existence of God on purely speculative grounds, apart from any appeal to the evidence of religious experience itself, is to render a greater service to religion than if the proof had been based on the testimony of the "religious consciousness." But the answer is that whatever Being may thus be proved to exist does not evoke

the response of religious sentiment. The "God" of a metaphysical theory which does not include religion among its premises is not the God of religion. This consideration opens up new vistas. We must expect, and we shall find, other types of idealism which try to approach the problem of God, not apart from, but through, a philosophical appreciation of religion.<sup>1</sup>

And there is a last point. Nature, on Berkeley's theory, implies not only an all-witnessing mind, nor only a creator, but a creator who is all-wise and all-good. In other words, Nature, just because it is nothing but the "signs and effects" of God, must be perfect, or, at least, the best possible. But what then of the evidences of evil which confront us on all sides—"monsters, untimely births, fruits blasted in the blossom, rains falling in desert places, miseries incident to human life," as Berkeley himself puts it? The problem is doubly pressing if Nature is but the sensuous medium through which spirits communicate with each other. The evil must, then, have a value for the moral making and moulding of spirits. In general, the argument from design, inferring, as it does, the infinite wisdom and goodness of the creator, in spite of the evil in the world, raises in a fundamental form what is nowadays called "the problem of value." Berkeley's brief discussion of evil runs wholly on

<sup>1</sup> See chs. iv. and v.



the lines on which conventional theology justifies the ways of God (where God inflicts evil) to man. He does not ask the deeper question whether religion, at its best, does not take us "beyond good and evil" altogether.



IDEALISM AS THE THEORY OF THE  
ABSOLUTE



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## Chapter IV     *The Idealism of Kant and Hegel*

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**A**FTER Berkeley, Kant; after Kant, the whole host of idealists, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and many lesser names, who constitute the philosophical side of the "romantic" movement during the first half of the nineteenth century. Nor does the history of idealism come to an end with the age of romanticism in Germany. On the contrary, the idealistic impulse, dominating all its rivals, spread from Germany to other lands, where its developments have been largely independent of its later history in Germany itself. In France the "critical idealism" of Kant was made known chiefly by Renouvier; and Bergson's *élan vital*, as has already been mentioned, is a parallel development in French thought to Schopenhauer's *will* in German thought. In England, it was Hegel rather than Kant from whom thinkers so diverse as J. H. Stirling, T. H. Green, W. Wallace, Edward Caird, F. H. Bradley, B. Bosanquet, Sir Henry Jones, and many others, drew their chief inspiration. Bosanquet, indeed, has gone so far as to claim that the constructive impulse of Hegel's idealism did not come to full fruition until it was transferred from Germany to "a more congenial home in the English-speaking world," with its

“direct audacity, its decisive rejection of representative ideas in favour of directly apprehended unities—such as, for example, the living social unity.” It was, in fact, not so much the system, as the spirit, of Hegel’s teaching which the “Anglo-Hegelian” school made its own in its fight against the attempt of John Stuart Mill to reduce knowledge to an association of sensations and memory-images, and morality to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain for the greatest number. It was, again, Hegel’s philosophical analysis of the State which, restating in modern terms the essence of Plato’s social theory, helped these thinkers to transcend the traditional “individualism” of English social theory, as that still found expression in the writings of Mill. Above all, in Bosanquet’s words, his generation owed to German idealism “nothing less than a new contact with spiritual life,” for it emancipated them from thinking of life in terms of irreconcilable antitheses—this world and the world to come, God and the Devil, spirit and flesh, the supra-natural and the natural, ideals and facts—and taught them to look and work for unity, for the ideal realized in the actual. From England the idealist movement spread to the United States of America, where it was reinforced by direct study of the works of Kant, Hegel, and Fichte, and it was more particularly from Fichte that Josiah Royce derived the impulses which led him to a distinctive rendering of idealism in the

light of American experience. In Italy, on the other hand, it is Hegel who has become the spiritual father of the recent neo-idealistic movement there, of which Croce and Gentile are the outstanding figures. Meanwhile, in Germany itself, idealism experienced a temporary reaction about the middle of the nineteenth century, but revived with the cry "Back to Kant," and has come to stay in various "neo-Kantian" and "neo-Hegelian" forms. In general, the majority of great philosophical thinkers in Europe in the nineteenth century have been idealists, and the spread of Western civilization has carried their influence all over the globe. In India and Japan, no less than in Australia or South Africa, idealism is one of the chief subjects of study and debate in the philosophical departments of Universities, and fresh developments may confidently be expected, especially from the contact between it and Eastern thought and experience.

It is obviously impossible within the limits of a small book, like the present, to attempt a detailed account of a movement of thought so world-wide; so rich in thinkers of distinctive genius; so comprehensive in its efforts to use all sides of human life and experience as materials for its philosophizing; so conspicuous, too, by the number and variety of its critics and opponents. It is impossible to attempt even such a detailed analysis of the idealism of Kant or Hegel as we gave, in the last two chap-

ters, of the idealism of Berkeley. The difficulty is partly one of bulk. Berkeley's expositions of idealism, more especially the *Principles of Human Knowledge* and *The Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, are brief, and could be read through, without undue effort, in a day. Kant's three chief works, on the other hand, viz., *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Critique of Judgment*, would take some weeks, and the major works of Hegel some months, to study. But, chiefly, the difficulty is intrinsic. There is never much doubt what Berkeley means. There is often great and insoluble doubt concerning the precise meaning of what Kant and Hegel say. Indeed, the attempts to interpret Kant correctly have given rise to a voluminous controversial literature, in which much ingenuity has been spent, partly upon efforts to make Kant's utterances consistent with themselves, partly upon efforts to read into Kant, or out of Kant, the particular philosophical theories which the critics themselves regard as true.

This jungle must be left as a happy hunting-ground to specialists. What we shall here attempt is a task much simpler and yet still sufficiently daring. Omitting technical details as far as possible, we shall try to state, as plainly as we can, what are the distinctively *new* elements which Kant and Hegel introduced into idealism, and through which they have become the founders of a *new*

type of idealism, different from the idealism of Berkeley.

Berkeley's idealism, as we saw in the last two chapters, is essentially a spiritual pluralism, *i.e.*, a theory that the Universe is a society of spirits, and that the so-called physical world, analyzed as a collection of sense-data, is nothing but the sensuous medium through which God reveals Himself to human spirits and enables human spirits to communicate with each other. In other words, nothing is real, or exists in its own right, except spirits (persons, selves). Material things, as clusters of sense-data, exist only as produced and perceived by spirits, divine and human. Now *this* is the type of idealism with which we have so far dealt, and there are many thinkers, as we have already mentioned, who regard this as the only genuine type of idealism. To them, all differences between idealists are of minor importance so long as they agree upon the one fundamental point, *viz.*, the affirmation that the world is a society of spirits. Both terms, "society" and "spirit," are here of equal importance. For "society" affirms a plurality of spirits, as against the "monistic" view that fundamentally there is only a single spirit; and "spirit" excludes the existence of anything which, like "matter," is non-spiritual in its nature. Were Kant and Hegel spiritual pluralists in this sense? An affirmative answer to this question has recently been given for Kant by James Ward in his *Study*

of Kant, just as it was given for Hegel some years ago by J. McT. E. McTaggart in his *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*. So far as Kant is concerned, this view is, certainly, capable of being maintained by plausible arguments. There is, especially, good reason for thinking that Kant on this point followed Leibniz. But, on the other hand, we have Kant's own confession that spiritual pluralism was merely his "private opinion," and from this we are, surely, entitled to infer that it was not what he himself regarded as most important and essential in his philosophy. No doubt, it may be held that this private opinion of Kant's in favour of spiritual pluralism peeps out here and there in his philosophy, e.g., in those passages in which freedom of the will is identified with the initiative of rational agents, or again, where the sense of moral obligation is held to imply a "Kingdom of Ends," i.e., a society of rational agents each of whom is obliged to treat himself and every other as an end in himself and not merely as a means. But in neither case does Kant expand these positions to the dimensions of a general theory that only spirits exist, and he explicitly dissociates himself from Berkeley's "dogmatic idealism," by which, in this connection, he means Berkeley's treatment of Nature. And, in general, the problems which chiefly exercised Kant in his three *Critiques* are far remote from the defence of spiritual pluralism, and no unprejudiced reader



could possibly derive from Kant's writings the impression that he was concerned above all to establish that type of metaphysical theory. This remark applies to Hegel with even greater force. McTaggart's argument that Hegel regarded reality as a society of spirits is constructive and inferential. And, whatever degree of probability it may seem to possess, there is no doubt whatever that the bulk of Hegel's philosophy is concerned with quite other questions. If a society of spirits is the core of idealism, is it not a paradox that Hegel should have left his own position on the point enveloped in such a haze of doubt? Or does his preoccupation with other questions not suggest that for him the interest of idealism lies elsewhere? In any case, whatever Kant's or Hegel's position may have been, there can be no doubt on one point, viz., that most students of their writings have derived from them suggestions for a new and different type of idealism.

What, then, is this new type? We shall discern its lineaments in two outstanding features of Kant's idealism.

1. The first is Kant's treatment of mental activity on which we have already touched, briefly, in the last chapter. On Berkeley's theory, there must be acts of perceiving for sense-data, and things as collections of sense-data, to exist. But beyond this, Berkeley has nothing to tell us of the *nature* of the act. Still less does he give us an account

of thinking and reasoning, of judgment and inference. Yet it is only through thinking that we can be said to apprehend, or "know," an ordered world at all. The sense-data which at any given moment we perceive are, taken thus as momentary events, mere shreds of that total world of which we believe them to be part. Applying Berkeley's own metaphor of Nature as the "visual language" of God, we might say that a given moment's sense-data are like words torn from their context in the whole sentence, and conveying by themselves nothing intelligible at all, or at best a mere fragment of God's total meaning. Just as of any spoken sentence we actually hear at any moment only a few sounds, so in the succession of sense-data we perceive at any moment just a few bits of Nature. But just as somehow we can grasp the meaning of the whole sentence, though we never hear all the words at once, so we can grasp much of the system of Nature, though only a limited selection of sense-data is at any one moment perceived by us. If we were restricted at any moment merely to what, at that moment, we actually perceive, we should be aware only of a confused mass of manifold sense-data. We should not be aware of Nature as a "world," *i.e.*, an ordered whole, and the term "law of nature" would have no meaning for us at all.

There is, thus, a gaping lacuna in Berkeley's account of mental activity, and it is Kant's epoch-making achievement to have filled it.

Kant filled the gap by being the first modern thinker to realize that *to know is to judge*. An act of knowledge is an act of judgment. An act of judgment is an act of synthesis. An act of synthesis implies a principle of synthesis. If what we said just now is true, viz., that even for ordinary commonsense, let alone for science, Nature is not a mere stream of sense-data, but a world, a system, a whole ordered according to laws, it is not in virtue of mere seeing or hearing or touching that we thus know Nature, but in virtue of acts of judgment affirming the universal relations in which sense-data stand to each other. Let, *e.g.*, the sense-datum which I see be a brown, oval patch. I may say, "This is a table," or I may, without any words, put a book upon it. The latter action, no less eloquently than speech, reveals that I recognize the brown, oval patch for what it is; that I know (judge) it to be a table. The reader can readily verify this for himself. Let him take any colour-patch in his field of vision and ask himself, "What is this?" and the answer will reveal to him that he is never merely seeing colours, but judging each colour, or pattern of colours, to be some concrete thing. So, again, with sounds: they are not simply heard, but judged to be the sound of this or that—of the dinner-bell, of a passing motor-car, of a friend's step in the passage. Things, says Berkeley, are collections of sense-data. But rarely, if ever, is such a collection given

at once and as a whole. Rather, as our examples show, we perceive at any one time only one or two members of a collection and judge from these that we are in the presence of the whole thing which, if we choose to explore it, will provide us with an endless succession of further sense-data. Thus, once more, it is only in virtue of acts of judgment that we know and identify Berkeley's "collections" from the stray members which we actually perceive. And Berkeley wholly ignores the intellectual labour of discrimination or analysis, of combination or synthesis, of distinguishing the sense-data which go uniformly together from those which, though they may be perceived together at the same moment, have nothing to do with each other—a labour of thinking, or judging, without which not one of his "collections" would be known by us for what it is. The sentences in which we express those recognitions, or identifications, of sense-data as signs of concrete things, have a characteristic grammatical structure, viz., subject, copula, predicate or attribute. This linguistic structure expresses roughly the thought-structure, *i.e.*, the principle of synthesis implied in judgments of this type, viz., the principle (or, as Kant called it, borrowing the term from Aristotle, the "category") of thing-quality. In "this table is brown," the perceived sense-datum (the brown colour-patch) is judged to be the quality of a thing (table); and it is because of this relation that, seeing the brown

patch (the quality), I recognize the thing, *i.e.*, I know, or judge, it to be what it is—a table.

But there is another type of relation, or order, which illustrates Kant's theory of judgment as synthesis even more clearly, and which is of fundamental importance alike for knowledge and for practical conduct. Sense-data are related to each other not merely as qualities of things (in Berkeley's language, members of collections), but as causes and effects. All "laws of nature" are causal laws; all are of the general form: given an event, or events, of the kind *a*, an event, or events, of the kind *b* will invariably follow. Now, laws are not simply perceived by the senses: they can only be discovered by thought. But such discovery is, once again, synthesis—a discriminative, selective thinking-together of what is thereby judged to belong together. Thus, the principle of causality is another principle of synthesis, or category, furnishing a rule for discovering order in what, as simply given, is a confused stream of sense-data passing before us.

With the details of Kant's table of twelve forms of judgment, and, correspondingly, twelve categories, we do not need to trouble ourselves. For criticism has shown that it cannot stand as Kant formulated it. But the general principle of Kant's theory is important and of lasting value. We may restate it: If we know Nature to be an ordered world of things with their qualities, and of events

("changes") related to other events according to causal laws, it is not because such a world is simply *given* for anyone to perceive who will use his senses, but because of the *synthetic thinking* through which this order is revealed to us. These acts of synthetic thinking are acts of judgment in which we affirm of sense-data the relations in which they stand, identifying the contexts to which belong the colours, sounds, etc., from moment to moment perceived by us.

Before passing on, we may fitly pause for a moment, in order to appreciate the importance of this new point of view which Kant has here introduced. This will be best seen, if we consider the bearing of Kant's theory of judgment as synthetic on the problem of truth.

Truth is popularly said to consist in the agreement, or correspondence, of our ideas with facts (Copy-theory of truth). "Idea" is here used in Locke's sense of "object apprehended by a mind," or "object as it is perceived or thought." "Fact," then, must by contrast stand for an object "as it really is," or "as it is in itself." Now unless we are careful, this distinction, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> will land us in an insoluble difficulty. For ideas, *i.e.*, objects-as-we-perceive-and-think-them, are all we have got. If the question of their agreement or disagreement with "facts," *i.e.*, with objects-as-they-are-in-themselves, is to have any

<sup>1</sup> See ch. i., pp. 35 ff.

intelligible meaning, facts must be distinct from ideas. Objects as apprehended must be distinct from objects as they are. But, as we are limited to the former, how can we ever discover whether the former agree with the latter? Thus, this theory of truth, assuming it to be true itself, implies that it is impossible for us ever to know when we actually have truth. Most of Kant's philosophical predecessors inherited the tradition of analyzing our knowledge of the real world in terms of this distinction between ideas and facts, and thus were haunted, as, e.g., Locke was haunted, by the devastating doubt how we can know whether our ideas agree with facts, and whether there are any facts at all for our ideas to agree with. Berkeley certainly made a great step in advance when he dropped this dualism of ideas and facts, and thereby made it clear, once and for all, that we must seek for reality and truth *within* the world of our "ideas." For this apparent limitation to ideas, *i.e.*, to all we perceive and think, is really a charter of emancipation from the fiction of a world of transcendent and inaccessible facts. It does not impose a handicap: it opens up an opportunity for boundless advance in knowledge. For, instead of distinguishing the world of facts in principle from the world of ideas, it bids us realize that every distinction between what is real and what is unreal, what is true and what is false, must be a distinction *within* the total field of what we perceive and



think. In other words, facts do reveal themselves to us. We are not restricted to conjecturing that they *agree* with what we perceive and think: we can recognize that they *are* what we perceive and think.

In short, truth is not the correspondence, or agreement, of "ideas," or objects-for-a-mind, with "facts," or objects-in-themselves. Truth is the *identity of idea and fact*. Or, put less technically, we can, and do, perceive and think objects as they really are. We can discover the nature of the real as it is in itself. For reasons which will presently appear, we call this the Coherence-theory of truth.

Of course, thus baldly stated, the coherence-theory may seem to go to the opposite extreme and to be as untenable as the copy-theory. For, whereas on the copy-theory we can never know when what we apprehend is true, on the coherence-theory, it seems, nothing we think can ever be false. If the former makes knowledge unattainable, the latter threatens to make error impossible by treating all we perceive and think as fact, and destroying thereby the very distinction between fact and fancy, truth and error.

Clearly, a qualification is necessary. We shall discover what it must be by reflecting that error stands revealed as error only in the light of the truth: *veritas norma sui et falsi*. Why is it false to believe that the earth is flat, or that the sun goes round the earth? Because the "facts" are that



the earth is round and goes round the sun? Yes, but these "facts" are facts *for us*, *i.e.*, facts as we judge them to be. They are objects of thought; they are "ideas." We thus learn that what is true and what is false fall alike within the realm of "ideas," or objects-apprehended-by-minds; and their doing so, so far from making the distinction between truth and falsity impossible, alone makes it possible. A man, *e.g.*, finds he has made a mistake about his neighbour's character. He thought him dishonest and now discovers that he is "really" honest. The neighbour's dishonesty and his honesty are both objects of thought, yet the one is true and the other false. And the false was accepted as true, until the discovery of the genuine fact exposed the error. How, then, do we distinguish the genuine fact from the spurious? Only by the test of consistency or non-contradiction. We treat what we perceive and think as true so long as we have no reasons to think otherwise. When such reasons, *i.e.*, fresh evidences, are offered, they must themselves be perceived and thought and brought into relation with what we had been thinking before. What emerges as "truth" at the end of the argument is that way of "thinking together" all relevant data, which yields the largest area of mutually consistent facts. It is because of this principle of "coherence," or elimination of contradictions, which is thus operative in all our striving after knowledge, that this theory of truth

is called the coherence-theory. When the total object of thought is in all its details consistent with itself, then it is *fact*, and what we think is *true*.

Kant, in his analysis of knowledge in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, never so much as discusses the problem of truth. Nonetheless, the coherence-theory of truth may fairly be said to be directly derived from this theory of judgment, and this is the reason why it helps us to appreciate the philosophical advance which Kant makes in analyzing knowledge in terms of judgments instead of in terms of ideas. So long as knowledge is considered as consisting of ideas which correspond to facts, there is, as Berkeley clearly saw, no escaping the scepticism which lurks in the copy-theory of truth. But though Berkeley got rid of the dualism of ideas and facts, his own theory, as Hume in turn showed, escapes scepticism only by treating God as the cause of ideas. If, with Hume, we challenge Berkeley's belief in spirits, human and divine, we are left with a world consisting of nothing but a flux of ideas—a world in which there are no "things" retaining their identity through the changes of their qualities, nor any "laws" in accordance with which these changes are determined; in other words, a world without logical structure.

Here Kant's theory of knowledge as judgment steps into the breach. In knowledge, whether we perceive or think, whether we remember the past

or imagine the future, we always *judge*. Now, there are two important points about judgment. One is that it claims to be true. It is an assertion made with conviction. This assertive character is present even when we judge without speaking. In spoken judgments it appears in the inflexion of the voice. If we put it into words, it becomes the emphatic, "it is so," or "it is a fact that . . ." In other words, in this character of assertion judgments exhibit the principle of the identity of fact and idea—the principle that what we perceive and think is fact, is truly what we perceive and think it to be. The other point about judgment is that without the synthetic activity of thinking, strictly no "object" at all is apprehended by us; certainly, no ordered object-world of things with changing qualities and laws governing these changes. Thus Kant's achievement lies in forcing us to realize that a mere flow of sense-data does not amount even to the real world of commonsense, still less to the real world of the sciences, and that the difference between a flux of sense-data and an ordered object-world lies in the absence from the former of all those logical principles of order which, under the name of "categories," Kant traces to the synthetic activity of judgment. If we abstract these principles of order, the world dissolves into a chaotic stream of sense-impressions. The problem of our knowledge of the real world is solved, not by speculating about the correspondence of the objects

we perceive and think to independent facts, but by analyzing the principles of thought through which, in the progress of knowledge, we learn to trace in the flow of sense-data the lineaments of a logically ordered world.

But there is one fundamental difficulty inherent in Kant's analysis of knowledge as judgment, which we have so far kept sedulously out of sight. Judgment, it may be said, implies a subject who judges. If Kant's advance on Berkeley is that he identifies the character of Berkeley's "mental" activity as judgment, then Berkeley's *esse est percipi* comes to be *esse est judicari*—to be is to be judged to be so-and-so. This seems to make the object-world on Kant's theory even more dependent on mind than it had been on Berkeley's theory. For on Berkeley's theory, the object-world is dependent on mind for its existence. On Kant's theory, it is dependent on mind, not only for its existence, but also for its logical structure as a world of things and laws. If we are to take Kant literally, Nature has this logical structure because, in thinking together the data of sense, mind imposes its own principles of order upon them and thus makes Nature what we judge it to be. And what we judge it to be, *that*, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, *it is*. The statement, sometimes put into Kant's mouth by critics, that "thought makes Nature," is not found in his writings, but it represents not unfairly the drift of much of his language.

And when Kant traces all judgments to the thinking mind, which in this rôle bears the formidable titles of "consciousness as such" and "synthetic unity of apperception," the impression is deepened that Nature is what it is because "thinking makes it so"; in other words, that Nature is the product of the judgment-activity of our minds, working upon the data of sense. Now, above, we had, so far as possible, carefully avoided this sort of language, and spoken rather of the "discovery" of the logical structure of Nature, or of that structure being "revealed" through thinking-together the evidences of the senses. This we had done deliberately in an effort to sort out what is valuable in Kant's theory and deserves to be held fast from what is debatable and may have to be surrendered. For what is valuable is Kant's emphasis on the logical structure of Nature. What is debatable is his tendency to say that this structure belongs to Nature because our human thinking has put it there, as though our minds were fitted out with a fixed set of synthetic principles into which, as into "forms" or moulds, they pressed the shapeless "matter" of sense-data. The recognition of the logical structure of Nature is one thing. The derivation of this logical structure from perceiving and thinking mind as its source is another.

At the very least, "mind" is here ambiguous, and students of Kant have differed profoundly on the question of the precise sense in which "mind,"

or the "transcendental unity of apperception," is to be understood. According to one school, Kant's concept of mind as the source of all synthetic principles, and therefore of all logical form or structure in Nature, is valuable as a point of view, *i.e.*, as a method for fixing our attention upon the universal principles present in all the sensuous detail of Nature. Of course, "Nature," here, means Nature as an object of knowledge, Nature as what we perceive and think, this being the only sense which the term can intelligibly bear. The universal principles in Nature are not simply perceived; they are thought. When we reflect on what we judge Nature to be, we become aware of these principles. When, given a colour, we recognize a thing; when, given an event, we look for its cause, we judge Nature as Nature really is. This is, according to the interpretation of Kant which we are discussing, the point which Kant is trying to bring out. It would be a grave mistake, therefore, to think of these universal principles as arbitrary patterns imposed by human minds on sense-data. If we regard every event in Nature as having a cause, we are not merely indulging a curious mental habit of the biological species, *homo sapiens*. On the contrary, Nature really is pervaded by causal law, and, implicitly or explicitly, we follow this principle, both in judging that *a* is the cause of *b*, and in enquiring what the cause, or effect, of *b* may be. It is the presence of these identical principles in the

judgments of different minds about Nature which leads Kant to sum them up, rather misleadingly, in the concept of the "consciousness-as-such."

On the other hand, when we approach Kant's "consciousness-as-such" from the point of view of Berkeley's spiritual pluralism, we shall be interested, not in the question whether "consciousness-as-such" is a name for a set of logical principles determining all our judgments concerning Nature, but in the question whether this consciousness-as-such should be regarded as a single cosmic mind, corresponding to the unity of Nature, or whether we should conceive it as exemplified in a multiplicity of individual minds. This question, obviously, switches us back into the issue of spiritual pluralism v. spiritual monism, and takes us thereby clean away from the characteristically novel orientation of Kant's *Critical Philosophy*. The full fruits of this new orientation were garnered, as we shall see, by Hegel, and by a host of English thinkers who drew their chief inspiration from Hegel.

2. Kant's second contribution to the building up of a new type of idealism requires much less technicality for its exposition, and is much easier to appreciate.

It may be described, briefly, by saying that Kant rediscovered an object for philosophical study of which men since the Middle Ages seemed to have lost sight, viz., *the realities of their own spiritual*



life. Thus to describe it is, of course, to use modern, not Kantian, terms. So far as Kant has any single term for what we have just called "spiritual life," it is *reason*. Kant's three *Critiques* are concerned, the first with reason in knowledge (science), the second with reason in conduct (morality), the third with two heterogeneous topics, viz., reason in æsthetic enjoyment (appreciation of beauty) and reason in the study of living organisms (recognition of purposiveness in Nature). He offers us thus, as it were, a survey of the life of reason—of four great departments of experience and thought, four channels of man's interest in himself and in the world of which he is part.

It may well occur to a reader that religion and theology are omitted from this list. So far as there is an omission, Kant sought to rectify it, inadequately enough, in a work of his extreme old age. But the real answer is that the omission is only apparent, for the problem of God runs through all three *Critiques*. In a famous argument in the first *Critique*, Kant demolishes the traditional arguments for the existence of God—that is to say, he does not deny the existence of God, but tries to show that we cannot demonstrate the existence of God by purely theoretical reasonings. In the second *Critique*, Kant justifies belief in the existence of God as a "postulate of the moral reason," i.e., as a venture of faith demanded by our moral life. In the third *Critique*, he suggests that there is a kinship

between the moral spirit in ourselves and the spirit which reveals itself through the beauty and the purposiveness of Nature. But although Kant thus returned again and again to the problem of God from varying angles, it cannot be said that he offered an adequate philosophical analysis of religion either as a spiritual experience or as an historical phenomenon.

Nonetheless, the total achievement of Kant's three *Critiques* is, as we said, to reconquer for philosophy the realm of man's spiritual experience. This is not to say that such things as morality or art had not been discussed by other modern philosophers. They had, but with a difference. Berkeley's writings on morals (e.g., *Alciphron*) are devoted to an attack upon the licentiousness of "free-thinkers" and a defence of conventional morality, rather than to a philosophical analysis of morality as such. Hume and other English writers of the eighteenth century wrote treatises on morality often abounding in shrewd observations on human nature and conduct, but rarely even approaching a grasp of morality as a spiritual force in human lives. Again, the literature of that century abounds in essays on the Beautiful and the Sublime, but few of them raise the fundamental question, what light the pleasure of beauty or the awe inspired by the sublime throw upon the world which yields us these experiences. What distinguishes Kant's treatment from that of all his predecessors is (1)

that in every field—science, morality, æsthetic enjoyment—he applies the same method, viz., a search for universal principles, the presence of which constitutes “reason” in that field; and (2) that he ended by conceiving all these “critical” investigations as parts of a single philosophical enterprise in which Nature is considered as a factor in spiritual life, and as revealing in this context sides of its character which do not come into view at all when, by an act of abstraction, we consider Nature apart from this context.

A moment’s reflection on man’s own nature may serve as a concrete illustration of these general statements. A human act, as a movement of a human body and of its limbs, is an object of sense-perception, and belongs as such to the physical world, to Nature, as completely as the drift of the clouds in the sky, or the blossoming of a flower. It is a physico-chemical process, subject to all the laws of Nature, not one of which is broken, or suspended, in its happening. Yet this is not the whole nature of the act. As a voluntary act, it will be performed intentionally, be it for its own sake, be it as a means to an end. It may be done in obedience to duty, or, again, it may spring from unlawful passion. In any case, it will have a moral quality. Taken simply as a sensible event in the realm of Nature, nothing of this moral quality appears in the act. Nonetheless is this moral quality real; and, more, without it the *full* nature of the act is

not apprehended at all. What is true of a single act is true of the agent's life as a whole. His existence is a fact of sense-perception, but the full nature of this fact is missed in so far as we fail to apprehend the spiritual life of which the perceptible behaviour is the expression. Human language, in fact, with its sounds expressive of the speaker's thoughts, feelings, purposes, awakening responsive thoughts, feelings, purposes in the hearer, and all the time communicating objective facts from mind to mind, illustrates at once several different ways in which sensuous events may be symbols of spiritual realities. A different type of example may be found in the very act of abstraction by which, in the physical sciences, the world of sense-objects is studied as a mechanical system, without reference to life or mind, to æsthetic or moral quality, to religious response. The world of sense, thus abstractly considered, is itself a spiritual fact determined by a spiritual value, viz., knowledge. So far as the abstraction satisfies a theoretical interest, *i.e.*, so far as it enables us, within its limited sphere, to understand Nature better, just so far is it justified. But the character which objects and events in Nature, thus abstractly viewed, possess, is not their full character as it would appear if other sides of our total experience of Nature were taken into account. In other words, every "natural" science, as a system of judgments, affirms that Nature is really what, from

the characteristic point of view of each science, we perceive and think it to be. But, if so, the *nature* (so to speak) of Nature is relative to the point of view and the methods of each science, and can be understood only in this context. Thus, even though science treats Nature as "closed to mind," yet this very abstraction is a spiritual phenomenon, and draws Nature into that form of spiritual life which we call scientific knowledge or theory.

When, further, we remind ourselves that Nature is not merely an object of scientific curiosity, but the scene of our conduct, the instrument of our purposes, the source, often, of æsthetic pleasure, and the occasion even for religious emotions, we may realize that the character which science ascribes to Nature is much more narrow and artificial than the character which Nature discloses when all the resources of our experience are allowed to count.

These illustrations, and this whole line of argument, have taken us beyond Kant, but in doing so they have brought out more clearly the fruitfulness for philosophy of Kant's second achievement. This achievement, we may now repeat, is nothing less than this, that he redirected philosophy to the exploration of the universal principles operative in our spiritual experience in its several realms or branches—science, morality, art, religion. Such a programme involves showing, on the one side, how the character of the object is relative to the type of experience through which it is revealed, and,

on the other, how these several types of experience are related to each other. In general, though Kant himself hardly realized the full bearing of his philosophical achievement, it amounts to affirming the reality of spiritual experience and treating the world of sense-perception as exhibiting its full nature only in the context of that experience.

It is through this re-orientation of philosophical interest that Kant has become the originator of a distinctively new type of idealism, which Hegel, among his successors, may be said to have developed in its purest form.

To a student who has a first-hand acquaintance with Hegel's philosophical works, it may well seem presumptuous to attempt any discussion at all of his teaching in a few pages of an elementary book like the present. But if we permit ourselves, as with Kant, a very "free" treatment which, ruthlessly omitting not only all technical details but even substantial portions of doctrine, emphasizes the living spirit of Hegel's philosophy, we may hope to say something useful. For, after all, our interest is in a type of idealism of which Kant and Hegel were the founders, and we shall best discern the lineaments of this type by asking ourselves what is the living impulse or inspiration which has passed from Kant and Hegel to later idealist thinkers.

1. First, we must bear in mind that Hegel lived in a singularly stirring age. From all sides tre-

mendous experiences were crowding in upon men, challenging their accepted beliefs, enlarging their view of the world, shaking them out of their habitual grooves of feeling, thought, and action. It was an age of intense intellectual and artistic activity. There was the "storm and stress" period of German literature which led, on the one hand, to a new enthusiasm for classical art and the austere purity of its forms, and, on the other, to the typically "romantic" interest in the inner life of feeling and sentiment and in all that can feed that life, from the mysticism of mediæval Christianity to the history of the nation's own language, mythology, institutions. Goethe's *Faust* is a typical picture of the spiritual pilgrimage of a soul in that age—adrift upon the stormy sea of its own conflicting impulses, blown hither and thither by one intellectual influence after the other, winning through at last to clarity and self-possession in constructive work for human welfare. Alongside of intense activity in scholarship and historical study, in literature and art, science was making the discoveries and inventions which were heralding the age of steam and brought the leading nations of Europe to the threshold of the change from an agricultural to an industrial organization of their economic life. Above all, there were the powerful spiritual forces unchained by the French Revolution, so magnificently stirring in its ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, so sanguinary and destruc-



tive in its immediate effects. In spite of the excesses of the revolution, minds all over Europe awoke to dreams of a better order of society, and were taught that even the most old-established institutions are, after all, perishable and can be remoulded nearer to the heart's desire. And if the French Revolution gave the decisive impulse to the development of the democratic spirit in Europe, so the Napoleonic wars saw the birth of the spirit of nationality, which tapped hitherto untouched resources of patriotic loyalty and self-sacrifice in common men. It was an age abounding in great men—great generals, great statesmen, great scientists, great poets, great philosophers—hence an age of marked individualism. But, at the same time, these eminent individuals were vividly conscious of a destiny not of their own making or choosing, of being the tools of spiritual forces working through them, of which they could not grasp the full nature nor foresee the ultimate effects. They were great because possessed by something greater than themselves. Hegel's famous remark, on seeing Napoleon ride through the streets of Jena, that he had met "the world-spirit on horse-back," had a universal application. All the literary, scientific, political, religious movements of his time, no less than the great men in whom, as leaders, these movements were focussed and through whom they were carried on, seemed to Hegel so many diverse manifestations of the world-spirit, or, to use the

technical term, the "Absolute." Hence, the title of his first and most original work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, i.e., the theory of the appearances or manifestations of spirit, best expresses the philosophical programme of this new type of idealism. In detail, this programme was subsequently carried out by Hegel in a series of treatises on the *Philosophy of History*, the *Philosophy of Fine Art*, the *Philosophy of Nature*, the *Philosophy of Right*, all culminating in the *Logic* as the systematic exposition of the successive stages of the self-manifestation of the Absolute. Now, at the present day, the number and variety of the influences, intellectual, moral, æsthetic, religious, which converge from all sides upon open-minded men, and demand to be mastered by an effort of thinking, at once sympathetic and synthetic, are greater, not less, than they were in Hegel's time. Hence, the conditions for the kind of philosophical effort which Hegel made are just as favourable now as they were then, and the need is more urgent. This, then, is one reason why the spirit of Hegel's idealism is still alive, and, indeed, constantly reviving afresh, among present-day thinkers.

2. Secondly, it is obvious that the execution of so vast a programme as the philosophical analysis of all forms of spiritual life implies a new conception of the function of philosophy. In philosophy, i.e., through the philosopher, the world-spirit reflects upon itself; takes stock, as it were, of itself

and its achievements; becomes conscious of itself and its identity in all its diverse, and even conflicting, manifestations. For it to do so, the philosopher must throw his mind wide open to the whole realm of human experience. He must discern the spiritual forces underlying historical events. He must focus in himself the universal principles of Nature as revealed by science. He must grasp the essential nature of Beauty as embodied in works of art, and the essential nature of Right, or Law, as realized in the structure of society and in the actual conduct of law-abiding citizens. He must be responsive, in short, to the many-sided ways in which, through human institutions, civilization, culture, the world of sense, or Nature, is made instrumental to the realization of spiritual values. Indeed, one of the greatest services which Hegel has rendered to subsequent philosophy is that he has communicated to it his own firm grasp upon the concrete reality of human institutions, as *facts* rooted in the world of sense, yet spiritual in their proper nature. Thus, *e.g.*, a family, an army, a state are, to a spectator, visible collocations of human bodies engaged in a variety of visible interactions. But these collocations and interactions are unintelligible on the purely perceptual plane. To understand them we must grasp the relations in which the individuals stand to each other in these organizations and from which their functions, their rights, their duties, flow. We must grasp the pur-

pose or meaning of the organization as a whole, and how that purpose is realized through the activities of the members, each carrying out his function. We must, above all, attend to the effect of this membership upon the individuals who compose each kind of group and appreciate how its aim is to educate and moralize, even whilst it satisfies, their instinctive natures. For Hegel, it is only through membership of society that man becomes truly human. Only through society can he realize himself, and fill his life with spiritual value.

Now, to work out this sort of argument over the whole range of human experience is, it may be said, a gigantic task. And, truly enough, it surpassed in its details even Hegel's great learning and wide sympathy. How much greater and less practicable, then, must the corresponding task seem to us at the present day when a century of unexampled growth in human civilization has to be mastered? What single mind could still dare to focus in itself the results of scientific researches, infinitely specialized and subdivided as they have become, or to keep contact with all the countless interactions and cross-fertilizations which result from the interchanges of culture between nations, between continents, between East and West? Again, who would undertake to read the signs of the times in the world of national and international economics and politics? Are we, for instance, in the League of Nations on the threshold of a

development which will culminate in the Great Society of all Mankind? Are we advancing in mutual understanding and power of coöperation towards this ideal? Or are we, as Hegel thought, unable to develop an effective common mind for concerted social action except within the limits of the nation-state, of which the late war has created so many more examples? Again, who would venture to estimate what will prove living, what dead, in current forms of religious belief, worship, and church-organization?

Nonetheless, just because the task is far harder than it was for Hegel, it is also more urgent. Just because our civilization has become so much more many-sided than it was in his time, and so much fuller, too, of conflicts, the need is the more pressing to recall it to a sense of its unity. The enduring appeal of the new idealism of Kant and Hegel lies just in this, that the problem which it sought to meet is still with us, being inherent in the very nature of our civilization; that the spiritual need which they strove to meet is felt even more poignantly at the present day. Their idealism, as Josiah Royce once said, is "the expression of the very soul of our civilization." It will prove a vain fancy only if our civilization has no soul to express.

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## Chapter V    *Dialectical Method and the Absolute*

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THE last chapter, with its brief references to Hegel and its somewhat longer account of Kant, made, of course, no pretence to give even a bird's-eye view of their philosophies. Its sole aim was to introduce the reader to a new point of view and a new philosophical programme, resulting in an idealism very different from that of Berkeley.

It may help us to bring this difference into clear focus, if we put it to ourselves in this way. All philosophy is, at bottom, an effort to know "reality" or the "real world." Now the real world is, certainly, the world which exists. "To be real" is a common synonym for "to exist." But whatever exists has also a definite quality, character, nature. For example, when I perceive something, I learn, not only *that* it is, but also *what* it is. Over the whole field of experience, whatever exists, exists as having a definite character. Existence and character, "that" and "what," go together—distinguishable, but not separable. But a difficulty arises from the fact that an object, though it must always present itself in some character, does not always present itself in its *true* character or as it *really* is. In other words, the

terms "reality" or "real" refer, not only to the existence of objects, but also to their nature, as when we speak of the "real nature" of a thing. "Real," in this second sense, is a synonym, not of "existent," but of "true."

Even philosophers have sometimes been misled by forgetting, not only that "real" has these two senses, but also that, though we can distinguish them, we cannot divorce them one from the other. Some philosophers, for example, speak of "degrees of reality or truth," whereas others insist that an object is either real or unreal, but that it cannot be, as it were, partially real. The former are taking "reality" chiefly in the sense of real nature; the latter are thinking chiefly of existence. Now, granted that there would be a paradox in speaking of "degrees of existence," there is, surely, no paradox in saying that an object may be perceived or thought in more or less of its real character. For, whenever we perceive or think, we perceive or think something to be so-and-so. But the so-and-so may, in any given case, stand for a mere fragment of the fact as it really is; and, apart from being fragmentary, and, therefore, false by omission, there may be positive error by false additions and connections. To urge, in such a case, that what we perceive and think is not the *whole* nature of the object, or to say that one view of the object includes more of its real nature than another, is surely appropriate and legitimate. And this, put



quite simply, is what the doctrine of degrees of reality means.

Our two types of idealism, then, may be contrasted by saying that the type which follows Berkeley throws the emphasis on the problem of existence, whereas the type which follows Kant and Hegel throws the emphasis on the real nature of that which exists. The former builds its theory of the world on a definition of existence. The latter strives to elicit a comprehensive view of the real nature of the world as a whole from a reflective survey of all different forms of experience.

Of course, a definition of existence must promptly turn into a theory of the nature of what exists. It can be given in no other way, just because, as we have seen, existence and nature, though distinguishable, are not separable. Thus, when Berkeley tells us that to exist is either to be a perceiving mind (spirit, self) or else to be an object (idea) perceived by a mind, he is obviously defining "existence" in terms of the nature of what exists. It would be impossible first to define existence in the abstract and then to ask of what sorts of things existence, so defined, might be predicated. It is only from the nature of existing things that we can learn what it is to exist.

No more are existence and nature separable for the alternative type of idealism which goes straight for the problem of the real nature of what exists. For the postulate, so to speak, on which this type

relies is that every experience reveals both *that* something exists and *what* this something is. Or, quite generally, its working principle is that the real, *i.e.*, existing, world discloses itself in every experience, but in different ways and degrees in different experiences. Hence arises the synthetic, or synoptic, problem of grasping the real nature of what exists by thinking together the evidences of all different forms and modes of experience.

We have described the difference between these two types of idealism as one of emphasis. We might also have said that they attack the same problem from opposite sides. Hence, it might well have been expected that they would meet in much the same final conclusion. But, in fact, this has not been so. The Berkeleyan type of idealism, whatever route it may in detail follow, aims at the goal of a spiritual pluralism. The other type culminates in the concept of the Absolute. This latter we must now try to understand with as little technicality as possible.

In this task, it will help us if we rid our minds of the very natural assumption that the main difference between the two types of idealism is over the question whether the world is a Many or a One, whether it is an ordered hierarchy of spirits culminating in God, or a single spirit, be that spirit conceived either as personal and therefore as identical with God, or impersonally as a single spiritual life or principle, the Absolute. No, this

issue between "monism" and "pluralism" is relatively subordinate. Nor is it at bottom a numerical question. On the contrary, it depends, as we shall see, on the view we take of the real nature—the "degree of reality"—of "finite," *i.e.*, more particularly of human, minds. The pluralist insists on the distinctness and privacy of individual minds as their most important characteristic: I am not you; every mind is a unit distinct from every other. The absolutist regards each mind as a world, a microcosm, drawing its contents from the Universe, the macrocosm. My mind consists of all my experiences, of what I perceive, think, feel, will. The problem is to study minds as focussing in themselves more or less of the whole reality and as being themselves more or less "real," according to the range of what they respond to and the degree of harmony and coherence in their worlds. And absolutists hold that, from this point of view, the formal distinctness of minds, if it does not exactly vanish, becomes subordinate and instrumental to pervading identities. It is a single reality which appears in the different worlds of different minds—an "identity in differences."

But we have been anticipating and must retrace our steps.

In order to set ourselves right for understanding what is meant by "the Absolute," let us go back, first of all, to Kant's conception of synthesis, extended, however, as Hegel extended it, from the

sphere of science with its synthesis of the data of sense-perception, to the whole realm of our experience, so that the philosophical problem becomes one of thinking together all different forms of experience, each taken as revealing a characteristic side, or aspect, of the real world. We may, if we like, formulate the philosophical programme of Absolute Idealism as a synthesis of science with religion, with morality, with art, and so on. But the important point is to remember that "science," here, does not mean merely "thoughts" in human heads as distinct from "facts," nor does "religion" mean merely a bundle of beliefs, and perhaps fictions, born of human imagination and the desire for a make-believe world more nearly in harmony with our fears and hopes than the actual world. No, science means *the world from the scientific point of view, i.e., what we, as scientists, think the world to be*. To call science "knowledge" is to declare that the world, so far as science deals with it, is really what, as scientists, we perceive and think it to be. Or, again, we may say that science consists of judgments or propositions in which the real nature of the world is affirmed to be so-and-so. The idealism with which we are now dealing—and this is the first point to which to hold fast—extends this principle to all forms of our experience and thought. Thus, religion, too, into which, as a form of experience, there enter, not only the same perceptions of the world

of Nature as enter into science, but also a host of feelings and emotions and desires, represents through its beliefs, doctrines, creeds, a certain view of the world, a theory of the world's real nature. *There is in religion the same claim which we find in science, the same assertion that the world is really what we think it to be—in this case, what we think it to be from the religious point of view, i.e., in the light of religious experience.* In a similar way, the same principle applies to morality, to art, in fact to every systematic body of judgments through which the real nature of the world, in one of its aspects, is defined.

In interpreting these statements, the reader must bear in mind that when we speak of the "world as we perceive and think it to be," and, again, the "world as it reveals, or discloses, itself to us in our experience," we intend both phrases to mean strictly one and the same thing. For the important principle is that our "ideas" are "facts," i.e., that what we perceive and think is not different from, but identical with, the real world.<sup>1</sup>

Let us nail down this principle, for it is crucial for the whole argument.

The Universe is always with us, in us, around us. Every moment of experience attests its presence, is evidence for the affirmation that something exists. What exists? What is this something? To these questions all perception, all

<sup>1</sup> See ch. iv., p. 124.

thought, all feeling, supply an answer, or, at least, the materials for an answer. Philosophy is the endeavour to elicit from these materials a revelation of the whole nature of the Universe which shall be as coherent and complete as we can obtain. What we have here called the "Universe" is the "Absolute," considered as the single reality which reveals its various sides in the different forms of our experience. In the technical language of idealistic Logic, the Absolute is the single subject of all our judgments. In the technical language of idealistic Metaphysics, it is an "identity in differences." But behind these technicalities lies the plain belief that reality reveals itself in all our experiences, and that in different experiences it reveals different sides of its nature, and these with different degrees of adequacy.

It follows that the ideal of philosophical knowledge demands both comprehensiveness and systematization. If we are to "think together" all the clues we have towards the real nature of the Universe, then in principle no experience may be omitted as irrelevant. The whole, if it is to reveal itself to us as it really is, demands an effort at all-inclusiveness. But, equally, it demands an effort at coherence—at the orderly interrelation, the mutual conditioning of details within a whole, which we sum up in the term "system." The most striking mark of lack of system is conflict or contradiction between the elements to be included.

Hence, the demand for system is a demand for the elimination of contradictions, for thinking the Universe as a *self-consistent* whole.

Are these demands for inclusiveness and consistency merely arbitrary human ideals which our minds impose upon a world whose real nature is alien to them? Are we merely weaving the manifold data of our experience into all sorts of elaborate patterns because it is the nature of our minds so to think? Are the *cadres de l'intelligence*, as Bergson calls them, like distorting glasses through which we see the real, not as it is, but as the structure of our minds makes it appear? In other words, is it conceivable that "really" the Universe is an unintelligible chaos, but that our intelligence, swayed, as Bergson would have it, by practical interests, or, as others say, by our emotions, by the desire for a kindly, protective Universe, picture to us an illusory phantom of order and harmony? Kant's treatment of the categories as the principles of the mind's own synthetic activity is, as we have seen, a standing temptation to contrast our "subjective" ways of thinking with the "objective" nature of the real. If we yield to this temptation, there can be only one conclusion, viz., the sceptical conclusion that we apprehend reality, not as it really is, but only as distorted by the nature of our own minds. This conclusion, as will be seen, is the direct antithesis of the principle on which the theory of the Absolute is based. "Objective



Idealism" is so called precisely because it affirms that "ideas" are "objects," are "facts," *i.e.*, that the real is what it discloses itself as being to our perception and thought. Hence, in keeping with this principle, we must say that in yielding to the demand for all-inclusiveness and system we are under the sway of the very nature of the real. We must seek totality and consistency—not because it is the nature of our minds to think so and not otherwise, but because it is the nature of the real which obliges us so to think. These demands do not spring from our minds as distinct from what they apprehend. They spring from *what* our minds perceive and think, *i.e.*, from the real which is there revealing itself to us. A mind filled with the passion for exploring all realms of experience and eliciting from them a comprehensive and self-consistent knowledge of the world is precisely a mind the thinking of which is determined throughout by the nature of *what* it experiences. In such a mind's hunger for inclusiveness and in its intolerance of contradiction, the fundamental nature of the real reveals itself. Philosophical theory, in formulating these principles of comprehensiveness and coherence, merely makes us by reflection conscious of the fact that the nature of the real works in and through our minds, determining us to think so and not otherwise. Spinoza has a memorable phrase which we may fitly apply here: *deus sive natura quatenus humanam mentem constituit*, or,

as we may paraphrase it into the language of our present argument: "reality as focussed in the human mind."

Now, this intolerance of contradiction plays an extraordinarily important part in philosophical thinking. The experience of contradiction is the ever-recurrent stimulus to philosophical reflection and gives rise to a method which Plato, who first employed it on a large scale as the distinctive method of philosophy, called "dialectic." This term is nowadays often used in a debased sense as if it meant nothing more than "logic-chopping," "hair-splitting," and, generally, idle argument about words. Even philosophers, in their revulsion from Hegel's "dialectical method," look askance at the term. Hegel over-systematized the method by trying to ascend through a series of triads of concepts from the concept of bare Being to the concept of the Absolute. Each triad was composed of a thesis and an antithesis reconciled in a synthesis, which synthesis, in turn, was confronted by its antithesis, thus leading to a further and higher synthesis. These dialectical triads, so Hegel claimed, represented the necessary movement of philosophical thought just because they were necessary stages in the self-revelation of the Absolute. No thinker of the first rank, however great his debt to Hegel, has ever followed him in adopting this scheme. If we ask ourselves, What is living and what is dead in Hegel's philosophy?

we must answer that what is dead in his ladder of triads. If it had ever been alive among English-speaking idealists, F. H. Bradley's withering denunciation of it as a "ballet of bloodless categories" would have sufficed to kill it.

But if we abandon Hegel's particular system, we cannot abandon the method of dialectic in general. We may avoid the term: we cannot avoid the procedure. For the procedure is dictated by the materials with which philosophy has to deal—in other words, by the nature of the real as it reveals itself through philosophical thought. A philosopher cannot but be a dialectician, for dialectic is the effort of thought to overcome the contradictions which arise in the very process of thinking together all aspects of the Universe. These contradictions have their root in the fact that the Universe reveals itself to us piecemeal. Whatever the fragment of the whole be that we thus meet with in a given experience, thought affirms it as disclosing in its nature something of the nature of the whole, and seeks to develop its implications, to understand the conditions which make it what it is. That fact, that aspect, fragmentary though it is, is accepted and fixed as true. But, on other occasions, other facts, other aspects, are similarly accepted and affirmed. And between these fragments of the whole truth there may, when they are first thought together, be any degree of incoherence and conflict. For philosophy, this

conflict assumes its most formidable shape when it occurs as large-scale contradiction between already organized realms of systematic thought and theory. There is occasion for dialectic, as Plato showed, when a man, trying to give an account, *e.g.*, of the nature of justice, brings forward, say, the definition that justice consists in dealing with men according to their deserts, and therefore in doing good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies. But doing harm to a man is to make him a worse man, and can that ever be just? Thus, there is a contradiction between the nature of justice, as defined, and some of the actions which that definition would justify. (The modern form of this particular contradiction may be studied in detail in the literature about prison-reform.) There is much greater occasion for dialectic when, *e.g.*, science and religion conflict, *i.e.*, when the nature of reality as affirmed by scientific thought clashes with the nature of reality as affirmed by religious thought. The sting of the problem lies just in this, that we cannot say that all the truth is on one side and all the error on the other, though this way out has often been tried. There is truth on both sides. Both science and religion are well-founded in the nature of things. Yet reality cannot be ultimately at war with itself. And, thus, a reconciliation has to be sought by an examination of the conditions and limitations of each of these two conflicting thought-worlds.

Examples of such contradictions between organized systems of thought—"antinomies" as they are technically called—could be multiplied indefinitely. They occur within the realm of science, as when the mechanical theory of Nature tries, and fails, to include satisfactorily the phenomena of life and consciousness. They occur between science and morality, as when the determinism of science clashes with the moral postulate of the freedom of the will. They occur within morality, as when law confronts liberty, or when self-discipline and self-denial point one way, self-realization and self-assertion another. Duty *v.* inclination, egoism *v.* altruism, asceticism *v.* self-indulgence—everywhere we meet with these antithetic ideals which carry perplexity no less into our conduct than into our thought. Again, there is a contradiction between morality and religion, for morality bids us fight and exterminate evil, whereas religion bids us regard the world as the perfect work of a perfect God. But how can we reasonably strive to better a world which is already the best of all possible worlds? There are contradictions in religious thought itself, reflecting the extreme emotional oscillations of the religious experience which ranges from the pole of complete alienation from God ("my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") to the other pole of complete union with God ("not my will, but thine, be done"). Anyone who will critically examine the

accounts which theologians give of the nature of God and of God's relation to Man and the World, will find it difficult to avoid endorsing Mr. F. H. Bradley's verdict that the idea of God is "riddled with contradictions." In fact, it is just the most distinctively "spiritual" forms of experience and thought which are most profoundly characterized by such antitheses. Matter enough, then, and urgent occasion in plenty for the exercise of dialectic.

In fact, we are now in a position to appreciate, from a fresh angle, the greatness of the philosophical achievement of Kant and Hegel, when, fairly and squarely, they brought the whole realm of human experience within the focus of philosophical reflection, and thus made us acutely and abidingly aware of the antinomies which run through it all. There is truth of some degree everywhere, but how to hold fast these divergent, and often conflicting, bits of truth in a single, comprehensive, coherent view of the All—that is the problem. More particularly, Kant, and Hegel even more clearly and consciously than Kant, faced the antithesis between what some moderns call "the world of facts" and "the world of values," or, in other words, between Nature, as a mechanical system, including in its scope even human bodies and their movements as "physico-chemical machines," and the world of Mind as concretely expressed and realized through human civilization which, in science, art, morality,

religion, in state and church and other forms of social coöperation, uses Nature to make spiritual values actual here and now. For *this* is the second insight which the concept of the "Absolute" expresses. It sums up, not merely the theory that reality as a whole reveals itself throughout the whole range of our experience, but it affirms also that values do not dwell, unrealized, in a purely imaginary realm, but that they are real, and ever in process of being realized, here and now in this actual world of ours. To affirm the Absolute is to affirm that "real" and "ideal," "fact" and "value," are one.

So far we have dealt with what all theories of the Absolute may be said to have in common. But, beyond this area of agreement, divergent developments are possible, and we may fitly conclude this brief study of idealism by comparing two contemporary examples of such developments. We refer to the philosophies of F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet, the two outstanding figures among British thinkers at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century.

Just as Chaucer has been called a poets' poet, so Bradley may be called a philosophers' philosopher. His famous treatise on *Appearance and Reality* (1892) has had few readers outside the ranks of professed students and lovers of philosophy, but it is rightly ranked by all who are competent to judge as one of the most original works of specula-



tive thought in England. For details of its rich contents we have here no room. All that concerns us is the general principle which Bradley carries right through his argument with marvellous consistency and dialectical skill.

In outlining the argument which yields the concept of the Absolute, we had started with Kant's account of thought as synthetic and shown how this expanded into the philosophical programme of "thinking together" the evidences of the nature of the real furnished by all modes of our experience, and, in doing so, of overcoming the contradictions everywhere arising from the fact that our experience of the real is always, in greater or lesser measure, fragmentary and one-sided. These contradictions, or "antinomies," are the results of partial efforts at synthesis, and, in turn, provoke further synthetic thinking. Clearly, the hope here is that further thinking will resolve the difficulties which thinking itself has created. This is the point from which Bradley starts. He reminds us that thinking is not the only mode of experience, but that it differs from doing, from perceiving, from feeling—in general, from "immediate experience." Thinking is necessary, for without it experience is nothing but a mass of confused, undifferentiated feelings and impressions, melting and flowing into each other. Thinking discriminates; it identifies data in themselves different; it fixes terms and relations between them; it introduces order and system.

But, in doing so, thinking destroys and loses the thrill and tang and vividness of immediate experience. In Bradley's technical language, it "divorces idea from existence, what from that." In other words, in thought we not only deal with what is not immediately given at the moment at all, but even when we deal with the moment's datum, we catch it up into a network of relations and interpretations, tearing it from its immediate context and connecting it with other terms not now immediately experienced at all. The interpretation of, *e.g.*, a colour, itself first discriminated in the mass of immediate sense-data, as the quality of a thing which has many other qualities, and undergoes many changes, not now actually experienced, is a familiar example of the work of thought. The various concepts and theories of science, erected on the basis of selected groups of immediate experiences, supply examples of a more technical kind. Now, Bradley's main contention is that all this work of thought is at once unavoidable and also ultimately self-destroying, and, therefore, unsatisfactory. Immediate experience is chaotic and incoherent: through thinking it becomes orderly and intelligible. But there is a limit to this intelligibility. For, if we do not merely accept the results of thinking, but reflect, in turn, on the methods by which thinking has achieved these results, we find these methods to be inherently unintelligible, because self-contradictory. In other

words, contradiction is inherent in the very nature of thought. It is the symptom through which thought betrays to itself its radical vice—divorce from the immediacy of feeling. Hence, no thinking can, as such, reveal the nature of the real as it actually is. That nature can be found only in a higher form of experience, not given to us humans, in which the work of thought is preserved but reunited with the immediacy of feeling which thought had lost. This higher, and to us unattainable, experience in which idea and existence are restored to union with each other, is for Bradley the Absolute, or the Absolute Experience.

It will be seen that Bradley's use of the dialectical method is very different from Hegel's. Hegel makes thought achieve ever greater self-consistency in an ascending series of syntheses. Bradley, on the other hand, whilst not denying that some results of thinking are more consistent than others and thus possess a higher "degree" of truth and reality, yet maintains that no thinking, not even the best, can in principle escape self-contradiction. For practical purposes this does not matter. The thinking on which we rely in everyday life, and even more the systematic thinking in science, in moral and social theory, in theology, are good enough to live by. But philosophy cannot be content with these practical makeshifts. For philosophy is nothing but the attempt to carry through the demand for consistency to the bitter

end. And when, in this uncompromising spirit, we reflect upon the results of the thinking by which we ordinarily live, we find that they all exhibit an inherent self-contradictoriness, and thus fall short, in greater or less degree, of absolute truth.

Bradley, thus, uses the dialectical method destructively, rather than, as Hegel does, constructively. In his *Appearance and Reality*, he passes in review all the most familiar concepts by which we usually try to make experience intelligible to ourselves—such as thing and quality, change, activity, self, body-and-mind, goodness, God. All are weighed in the scale of self-consistency: all are found wanting. But, through all the details of this dialectical criticism, there run, for Bradley, two fundamental flaws characteristic of all thought as such. One is that thought is relational: to think is to break up immediate experience into a scheme of sharply defined terms and relations. For practical purposes we may be content to think *a*-related-to-*b*, but when, in turn, we reflect on this relational complex, we find ourselves driven to distinguish the relation from the terms which, nonetheless, it is supposed to unite. Thus, we must assume a further relation to connect the original relation with its terms. But the same trouble breaks out when we reflect on this fresh relation, and so on *in infinitum*. The relational scheme of thought, then, is inherently self-contradictory. And the other fundamental flaw in thought is that, being synthetic,

it is always identifying differences. It takes different sense-data and calls them qualities of the "same" thing; it takes different feelings, perceptions, volitions, and declares that in all of them it is the "same" self which feels, perceives, wills, and so on. The result, once more, is practically satisfactory: it *works*. But theoretically it is indefensible and unintelligible.

All this fine-spun argument is, no doubt, far removed from ordinary, practical life, with its loves and hates, its struggle for existence, its games and enjoyments, its politics, its wars. It is nearer to, and yet still far removed from, the work of the sciences, applied or pure. If any reader thinks it idle quibbling, and makes up his mind not to apply the test of absolute consistency to the results of thought so long as they "work," he may even elevate this preference to the dignity of a philosophical principle by calling himself a "pragmatist." For "pragmatism" is the theory that "the true is the useful," *i.e.*, that any way of thinking which leads to successful action, which yields predictions that we can verify, which enables us to control our environment and ourselves, or even which merely effects for us a better emotional adjustment to the world, is true. Pragmatism, in fact, is what remains over from Bradley's own philosophy when the dialectical criticism of the results of thought, with its culmination in the "Absolute," is left out. The reader, then, may,

if he pleases, stop where the pragmatist stops. But, on the other hand, if he goes on and applies to all the familiar constructions of thought the test of consistency, as Bradley does, he will find it difficult to resist Bradley's conclusions. Of course, here as everywhere, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. And it is not enough to give a casual nibble and then turn away impatiently as from unpalatable fare. To appreciate the force of Bradley's argument, it is necessary to repeat his intellectual experiment—for that is what it is: an experiment in rethinking the results of ordinary thought by the standard of consistency—and to repeat it with his sustained and uncompromising thoroughness, *living* with it, so to speak, until it loses its strangeness and acquires something of the obviousness which belongs to whatever one knows at first-hand, and not merely by report. But, then, this sort of experiment interests no one except philosophers, and this is why Bradley is a philosophers' philosopher.

Anyhow, Bradley's distinctive originality among defenders of the Absolute lies in the single-mindedness with which he holds fast to two positions. One is that reality does, indeed, reveal itself in what we think it to be. But the other is that the revelation ("appearance") of reality in thought is inadequate, as is brought home to us by the inherent inconsistencies of thought, on the one hand, and by the contrast between it and the various forms of

immediate experience (also "appearances" of the real), on the other. The "Absolute," thus, means for Bradley the solution of this fundamental antinomy. It is that superhuman form of experience in which the order and articulation of the world as we think it to be is reunited with the vividness and thrill of the world as revealed through sense and feeling.

The other version of the Absolute which we have undertaken briefly to study is that expounded by Bernard Bosanquet, especially in his two volumes of Gifford Lectures on *The Principle of Individuality and Value* and *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*. Here, again, we have no room for the wealth of detail without which the full weight of Bosanquet's argument cannot be adequately appreciated. We can note only his general angle of approach and the general cast and spirit of his vision of the world.

Let us set down, at once, the goal to be reached. "The Absolute," writes Bosanquet, "is simply the high-water mark of fluctuations in experience, of which, in general, we are daily and normally aware." In the same spirit he claims that "a careful analysis of a single day's life of any fairly typical human being would establish triumphantly all that is needed in principle for the affirmation of the Absolute."

These, surely, are arresting sentences. They hold out a fascinating promise. To understand



what Bradley means by the Absolute, one has to undergo the toilsome experience of reflecting systematically on the difference between thought and immediate experience, and of verifying by dialectical experiment the self-contradictions which vitiate all efforts to think consistently. To understand what Bosanquet means by the Absolute all we need—though, in truth, even this demands a sustained effort of philosophical insight—is to learn to discern the Absolute as it reveals itself in the facing and solving of problems, the tensions and harmonies, the struggles and victories, of daily experience. “Dialectic,” for Bosanquet, is not merely an abstruse game that a philosopher plays in his study with thoughts as counters. On the contrary, “the transmutation of experience, in accordance with the law of non-contradiction, is the principle of daily life.” Here are some examples of what Bosanquet means by this “transmutation of experience.” “From finding our way among mountains to moulding our daily business with a self-consistent purpose, or solving an economic problem, or discerning the reality of beauty through the appearance of ugliness, or the lovable through the apparent failings of character, we find from day to day how contradictory aspects blend into harmony as linking and distinguishing contents [= facts, or aspects of facts] come into view. . . . So far as the finite being lives a life at all, it affirms in its whole existence the principle of the Absolute.

It transmutes toil into happiness by seeking it as a pledge of devotion, and pain into love by the depth of tenderness it evokes, and hardship into courage by its revelation of what a man is able to be."

Of such kind, then, according to Bosanquet, are our clues to the nature of the Absolute. We have been told now where to look and what to look for. The Absolute, clearly, must be the most familiar fact of all, present throughout the whole of our experience, and hard to discern, not because it is remote and abstruse, but only because it is so near, so all-pervading that, as it were, we cannot see the wood for the trees. It is the business of philosophy to make of this familiar fact an explicit object of attention, by crystallizing it into language which will point it out to us, direct us to discern it. Of this great argument we can here select only a few samples, but we shall choose them so as to continue the topics with which we have been chiefly concerned so far.

One of these topics has been that of mental activity. Both in dealing with Berkeley's theory of mental acts as necessary to the existence of objects ("ideas"), and in dealing with Kant's account of mental activity as synthesizing, by means of its own inherent principles, the material of sense-data, we had hinted that we should have to return to the subject and consider another view of what mental activity is and of what part it plays in reveal-

ing reality to us. The moment for this reconsideration has now come. We start from what we have gained. We have gained, in the first place, the insight that Berkeley's analysis of knowledge into bare acts of perceiving confronted by objects given whole and complete just as they are perceived, will not do. Berkeley's preoccupation with sense-perception leads him to neglect, not only the parts which remembering and imagining play in knowledge, but, above all, thinking and reasoning. We have gained, secondly, from Kant the insight that knowledge is thinking, in the sense of judging, and that judging is a synthetic activity—a thinking-together of the data of experience yielding a fuller revelation of the nature of the real. We have learnt, thirdly, that there are universal principles involved in this thinking-together, but whether these principles are imposed on the data *ab extra*, as is suggested by Kant's usual language about them, or whether they are inherent in the nature of the real which is revealing itself—this question we had left open. And, fourthly, we have learnt, partly from Kant, and more comprehensively from Hegel, that to this thinking-together the whole of our experience must contribute, and that, in truth, without the modes of experience in which we affirm, enjoy, and strive to realize spiritual values, the nature of the real is shrunk to a poor abstraction.

These four distinct steps in the development of

the concept of mental activity are drawn together in Bosanquet's concept of thought, or thinking, as "the active form of totality." What this means is most easily seen when one reflects on the way in which, *e.g.*, one discovers the solution of a problem. It is done by "thinking," of course. Yet, strictly, it is not I, the thinker, who do anything. It is rather that all sorts of thoughts occur to me, some to be rejected, others to be retained, with the solution either gradually growing up in, or, perchance, suddenly flashing upon, my mind. "Not I," said St. Paul, "but God that worketh in me." Here we have the principle in a special application. We get it quite generally, and in a way familiar to everybody, when we reflect what it is that makes us say, "It came to me"; "I had an inspiration"; "the problem presented itself from a fresh angle"; "the solution dawned on me," etc. Many and varied are the phrases of current speech, such as these, which bear witness that even in our most strenuous thinking success comes, not because the soul, the self, the thinker, can in some mysterious way determine what is to be thought next or what the solution shall be, but because the problem, the situation, the object, as apprehended by the thinker, develop themselves through his thinking, determining it by an impulsion which lies in themselves. It follows that the so-called "laws of the mind," from the laws of association to the laws of logic, are laws which

state how what a given mind apprehends here and now determines what it goes on to apprehend next. In other words, they are laws which formulate the nature of the real as controlling the sequence of what a given mind thinks, and determining, as "conclusion" in theory, or as "decision" in conduct, what that mind accepts as true or as right. Thought, in a word, "is the control of mental process by the real object." When we think with the maximum of conviction, when we are most sure that what we think is truly so, just then we feel most under the compulsion of the object. Everything we are aware of supports us in thinking just so: we have no ground to think otherwise. How, then, can the object *be* otherwise? If we are not to contradict some feature or other of the relevant evidence, we must think so, we cannot think differently—hence, the object is what we think it to be. The much-talked-of "necessity" in thought springs from the nature of the real world as that reveals itself, however fragmentarily, through what a given mind perceives and thinks.

This concept of mental activity implies, of course, a correspondingly revised concept of mind. Berkeley, distinguishing acts sharply from objects, can conceive mind (spirit, self, subject) only as a centre of bare activities. Abstracted from its objects, mind, as Berkeley conceives it, is an empty thing. Kant gives positive character and content

to mind by making it the seat of the categories in knowledge, of the moral law in conduct, of æsthetic pleasure in contemplation. Bosanquet, resting on Hegel, goes to the full length of treating every mind, in its kind and degree, as a "world," or, in his favourite phrase, as a "focus" in which objects meet. A creature's "world," we have no difficulty in saying, is that portion of the total Universe, that "cross-section" (so to speak) of it, which is defined by the creature's selective responses. But what else is the creature's "mind" except this selected portion of the Universe? "Response" is a term borrowed from biology. If for it we say "experience," then a mind will be what the experiences make it, which constitute it, and whose sequence is its history. And, if we remember that in every experience the real reveals some fragment of its nature, and that through the sequence of experiences there runs that active "nisus towards the whole" which, above, we recognized "thought" to be, we shall greatly lessen any difficulty we may feel about regarding a mind as a world, and about comparing different minds in respect of the range of what they thus include, or the organizing power they exhibit in removing contradictions and transforming conflict into order and harmony.

If this view of what a mind is, and does, be accepted, it is not difficult to pass on to that concept of the Absolute "as the high-water mark of

normal fluctuations in experience" which, a short while ago, we set before us as the goal to be reached. Two considerations, more particularly, may help us here. One is that the range and the organizing power of every mind depend very largely on social intercourse with other minds. There is a give-and-take in all contact and co-operation of minds, "in which the constituent elements of them all are modified into members of the new and common mind which arises." All social organization, all community-life, whether in family, church, or state, has this effect of constantly shaping and moulding each individual mind—making it feel, think, do things which are intelligible only when viewed in the light of the particular type of social whole of which these minds are constituent members. And the same is true of the "social heritage" of science, art, philosophy, religion, of social and political traditions, loyalties, ideals. In proportion as we draw on this heritage and in our turn add to it, we break through the limits of our narrow selves and become of value to ourselves and to others mainly through our contributions to this total spiritual achievement.

And this brings us to the second consideration. This total spiritual achievement, though the work of individual minds, interacting, communicating, each using, and building on, the discoveries, inventions, theories, creations of others, has yet not been consciously planned or sought by any one or




by all of them. Our industrial civilization, our language, our science, our art, our religion—all our spiritual achievements have grown up through our individual minds in particular situations, feeling, thinking, choosing this rather than that, yet none of the contributing minds conceived or chose just what the total actual outcome is. Never was the fate of the civilized world more intensely discussed by experts from every angle than it was at Paris in the Spring of 1919. But, did the makers of the Treaty of Versailles intend, or want, the present state of Europe? Through the worlds of human minds, as generation succeeds generation in history, there run large-scale patterns and developments which determine these minds without being fully grasped or understood by them. "Each separate mind reaches but a very little way, and relatively to the whole of a movement must count as unconscious. . . . Neither Christianity nor the coral reef were ever any design of the men or the insects who constructed them; they lay altogether deeper in the roots of things." The mind which awakens to this view of its place and function is led, from a fresh angle, to think of itself as an appearance of the Absolute.

We may fitly conclude our survey of idealism by glancing once more, in the light of Bosanquet's theories, at the contrast between the two types of idealism which we have been distinguishing. The one type of idealism, so we have found, conceives

reality as a society of spirits and denies that anything exists which is not a soul or spirit, however rudimentary. The other type of idealism, at any rate as represented by Bosanquet, appeals in reply to the principle that "we must perceive as actual the distinctions which give life its content." "Why insist," he urges, "on reducing to a homogeneous type the contributions of all elements to the whole? What becomes of the material incidents of life—of our food, our clothes, our country, our own bodies? Is it not obvious that our relation to these things is essential to finite being, and that, if they are in addition subjective psychical centres, their subjective psychical quality is one which, so far as realized, would destroy their function and character for us?" In other words, the speculative hypothesis that our own bodies, let alone other physical things, are really systems of souls of an order of development so low that we can no longer recognize or treat them as souls, has two defects. It extends the application of the terms "soul" or "spirit" by analogy to a point where they become meaningless. And it throws no light whatever on the part which our bodies and other physical things, just as we perceive and think them to be, play in our lives, be it from the economic, the scientific, the æsthetic, the moral, or the religious point of view. In short, Bosanquet's Absolute is not open to the familiar charge that in the Absolute all distinctions disappear. On the

contrary, to his Absolute the maintenance of distinctions is essential. Everything is what it is, just because in its existence and nature it is conditioned by other things, and, in turn, conditions them. "When the Absolute falls into water, it becomes a fish," is Bosanquet's boldly epigrammatic way of putting this point. Every phenomenon, just as it is, is a necessary appearance of the Absolute. So far as in it lies, it reveals the nature of the real under just those conditions. In interpreting these statements, however, we must always bear in mind that the phrase, "just as it is," when applied to any object, presupposes the fullest knowledge—the knowledge which includes all relevant evidence and is free from internal contradiction. In this respect, Bosanquet's idealism is not, as idealism is often charged with being, hostile to natural science. On the contrary, Bosanquet accepts animal and human minds as late-comers in evolution, and as presupposing both an external environment and a highly-organized physical body. Indeed, for him "it is the true spiritual view which regards Nature as mechanically intelligible," and treats the automatisms and habits of the body as conditions, no less than as instruments, of the mind. His view, unlike spiritual pluralism, is not open to the criticism voiced, *e.g.*, by L. T. Hobhouse, that "where everything is spiritual, the spiritual loses all distinctive significance."



But the strength of spiritual pluralism, after all, lies, not in its interpretation of Nature, but in its affirmation of God. As we noted in speaking of Berkeley: spiritual pluralism is the philosophical theory of reality which is most consonant with the theism of orthodox Christian theology. Theism appeals to us because it interprets religion by social analogies. God the King, God the Judge, God the Father—always a social relationship supplies the pattern on which the worshipper's thoughts of, and feelings towards, God are moulded. To know God and to be known by Him; to love God and to be loved by Him—are not these phrases drawn from the intimacies of personal intercourse at its best? Hence, modern theology stresses the personality of God as well as the personality of the worshipper. And justly, for self-conscious persons and their intercourse must be ranked by all tests as one of the highest appearances of the Absolute. But for all that a high degree of truth belongs to this way of thinking of God and of His relation to Man, theism labours under grave difficulties. These difficulties, being of the speculative kind which only dialectic brings to light, need not trouble the simple faith of simple men. But philosophy cannot shut its eyes to them. In conceiving God as a person and attributing to Him love, knowledge, power, will, we expose ourselves to opposite dangers, both equally fatal. For, on the one hand, we feel bound to assert

that these qualities exist in God in a perfection utterly beyond anything known in man; but the more we stress this transcendent perfection, the more meaningless do our terms threaten to become. On the other hand, the more we strive to fill our terms with their vivid human meaning, the more we shrink God to the dimensions of the human pattern with which we are familiar. Again, the concept of creation is not easy to apply to the relations of persons. For a person is a distinct centre of spiritual life, and how can one such centre, however eminent, be conceived as giving rise to other centres distinct from, and capable of opposition to, itself? And, lastly, there is the problem of evil, the existence of which has seemed to not a few philosophers and theologians incompatible with the omnipotence of an all-good, all-wise God. The late Dean of Carlisle, the Very Rev. Hastings Rashdall, was not the only contemporary thinker who felt driven by the spectacle of evil to deny the "infinite" power of God, and thus to believe in what is technically called a "finite" God.

These illustrations must suffice to show by what sort of contradictions theism is beset. And no doctrine which contains inherent contradictions can pass in philosophy either as a statement of simple fact or as one of ultimate truth. God, as both Bradley and Bosanquet agree, is an "appearance," though ranking high in the order of appearances.

Or, to put this verdict in less technical language, to conceive reality as God is a way of thinking which has a high degree of truth, but which under philosophical criticism turns out still to be inadequate to the nature of reality as a whole.

In other words, the concepts of person and personal intercourse on which pluralism relies seem to the absolutist to be untenable, if taken as ultimate truth. The Absolute, therefore, must be conceived as impersonal, or, rather, suprapersonal. What this means may, perhaps, best be appreciated by recalling that to many great thinkers, now as in the past, it has seemed that individual persons, as distinctive centres of consciousness, are evanescent and transitory compared with the spiritual achievements which they help to preserve and carry on, or with the spiritual values with which they identify themselves and for which they live. Religion has been defined as "faith in the conservation of values." What, on this view, we care about most is, not the indefinite continuance of our distinct selves, but the continuance of the spiritual values through the identification with which we become what we are and count in our own eyes and in those of our fellows. And even "continuance," if it means endless duration, does not adequately express the goal of our desire. What we want is rather the assurance that the things which fill our lives with value belong to the very nature of the real and are securely grounded there. What, in

short, this theory tries to render is the not unfamiliar experience of a man saying, out of his very loyalty and devotion to a cause (say, his country, or a scientific theory, or a plan for social reform), that his personal survival does not matter if but the cause for which he cares above all else prevails. And this desire of his implies, even if he is not philosopher enough to recognize the fact, that his cause should prevail because it is such as to be securely rooted in the whole nature of things—in the Absolute. Religion, from this point of view, is the response of the "finite" mind to the "infinite" whole, to reality as the embodiment of spiritual value. It is the travail of the imperfect striving after the perfection which, in this very travail, it feels to be, in principle, one with itself.

Obviously, we are here moving in a realm where clear-cut demonstration is impossible. Facing these ultimate problems with sincerity and courage, the greatest thinkers in human history have come to divergent conclusions, and will, no doubt, continue to do so in future under the conditions of human finitude. All that can be asked of us is that we should seek the truth as steadfastly as they, using always, in Bosanquet's words, "the best of logic and the best of life." For it matters profoundly what we philosophize with, *i.e.*, in what sorts of experience we find our most illuminating clues to the nature of the real. This is what the



great idealists bring home to us. And, therefore, whether or no we agree with their conclusions, we cannot follow a better example than theirs in our search for a "reasonable faith for open-minded men."



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